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Recollections

of a

Speyside

Parish



James Thomson

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**Recollections of a Speyside Parish.**

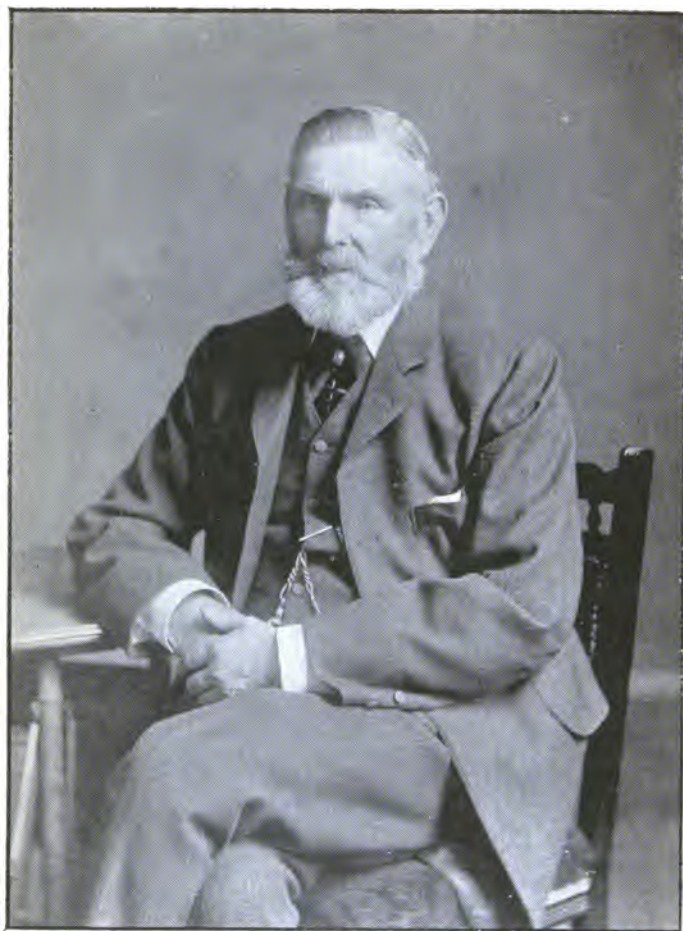






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Yours Sincerely  
James Thomson

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OF  
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1868.

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James Thomson

RECOLLECTIONS  
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A SPEYSIDE PARISH.

By  
JAMES THOMSON.

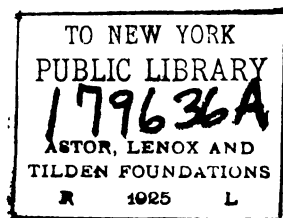
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## PREFACE.

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FOURTEEN years ago the first edition of my "Recollections of a Speyside Parish" were issued in book form. The criticisms passed upon it by the press, and the favourable reception it met with by the public, were a pleasant surprise to the Author. The issue was soon sold out, and he thinks the present a favourable time for the issue of a second and enlarged edition. The social and domestic conditions of life on Speyside have undergone such a revolution since the Author's boyhood, that he feels sure the inhabitants of Strathspey cannot fail to be interested in a record of the obscure and simple lives of the people before the iron horse invaded the Strath. The present generation cannot possibly realise how homely and primitive the modes of living were sixty years ago. The Author rejoices in the marvellous advance that has taken place during that time in all the conditions of life amongst the people of his native district. His earnest desire is to put on record the impressions left upon his mind by the sayings and the doings of the people among whom he spent his early days. Their homely joys and the vicissitudes of their every-day life left upon his mind impressions that death alone can efface.



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Behind Benrinnes' rock-crowned crest  
The evening sun sinks calm to rest ;  
Adown the rugged mountain steep  
The lengthening shadows slowly creep,  
Till gathering darkness, calm and still,  
Blots out from view each towering hill.  
At such an hour I love to stray,  
And list the murmuring of the Spey ;  
Then o'er my spirit, like a spell,  
Come thoughts I find no words to tell :  
Sweet memories of the bygone past ;  
Like summer clouds, they flit as fast  
Across my ever wakeful mind,  
And leave no shadow dark behind.

# RECOLLECTIONS OF A SPEYSIDE PARISH.

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## CHAPTER I.

### "THE MUCKLE SPATE."

"The rising rivers flood the nether ground,  
And rocks the bellowing voice of boiling seas rebound.  
The father of the gods his glory shrouds,  
Involved in tempests and a night of clouds ;  
Deep horror seizes every human breast,  
Their pride is humbled and their fears confest ;  
The rocks are from their old foundations rent,  
The winds redouble and the rains augment."

DRYDEN.

**H**AD the great flood or "muckle spate" of 1829 never occurred, in all probability my "Recollections of a Speyside Parish" would never have been written. To many readers it may seem strange that a boy who had not completed the fifth year of his age could retain so vivid and clear a recollection of that event and the incidents connected with it. To me those impressive events are as clear in my memory as they were on the days of their occurrence. Most people have heard of the old practice of "riding the parish boundary," and that young boys were whipped at certain places, so that in after years they would remember the spot and be able to testify to the boundary of the parish if it was ever disputed. If a boy in his after life could remember the spot where he was whipped, it is no wonder that so appalling an event as the "spate" left a lasting impression on the writer's mind. He can clearly remember one incident that took place before "The Flood." That was a visit to my father's house by Jamie Dean, the dominie. He came in with a handful of blue official-looking papers, and announced the appalling news that my

father was "drawn" for the militia. The terror that filled my bosom at that announcement cannot be described by me in words. Young as I was, the terrors of the press gang and the thought that my father would be sent to fight filled my mind with fear, and this fear was deepened by the visits of an uncle of my father's who had fought at Waterloo. On his evening visits to our house he recounted the fighting and the carnage of that memorable battle while I lay in bed listening to him. Neighbours came to condole with my father. Amongst them were my grandfather and uncle, to consult about what steps were to be taken to procure a substitute. Anyone "drawn" had the option of serving by a substitute. My father had neglected to join a club for the payment of a substitute for any of the members who happened to be "drawn." A substitute was sometimes difficult to find, and the money paid to one was far beyond the means of most working men. A substitute was found for my father, and my mind was relieved on that matter; but there still remained the phantom of the press gang haunting my imagination.

Before entering upon the narration of my "Recollections," I may say during the early years of my life many of the incidents recorded were kept fresh in my mind by my mother, who was gifted with a wonderfully retentive memory and receptive mind. My father, a native of Rothes, chanced to meet her at the house of his aunt in the parish of Aberlour. Her name was Mary Stuart. He fell in love with her, and in due time they were married in her father's house in the parish of Inveraven. He brought his bride home to a house in the Burnside of Rothes. Their "hame-comin'" was characteristic of the times. The bride came all the way on foot, escorted by a great number of relatives and friends part of the way. Some of them came the whole distance, and stayed for "the kirkin'," when the bride appeared to the whole congregation in her wedding braws. Many years after that event I had the testimony of a venerable Rothes wife "that a bonnier or mair weel-faured an' clean skinned couple was never kirkit in Rothes in her time." The friends who stayed for "the kirkin'" were quartered in neighbours' houses, and the event was long remembered in "the Burnside." As the young wife had been a resident with a "well-to-do" aunt, she was expected to show "toon breedin'" and possess "fine claes." A set of china given by her

aunt was admired by every wife in the village, but they were soon forgotten when they went "ben the hoose" to "taste," and to see the parrot that she had brought to her new home. The fame of "the funny bird that could speak" brought crowds of bairns round the door to get a sight of it. The poor bird was all unconscious of the admiration bestowed upon it. When it spoke, the children stared at it in amazement and wonder, and the older people were as much astonished as the children. Where did it come from and where did she get it? was the question of all who came to see the parrot.

When its mistress resided in Aberdeen she had to go daily to "the shore." Her aunt's husband superintended the salmon fishery carried on there, and in going to and from his office, the black-haired Highland lassie was noticed by a sailor lad passing and re-passing his ship, just returned from India. He made bold to speak to her one morning. "Would you like to see the great ship and the wonderful things on board?" She declined his offer, but every morning as she passed the ship the sailor lad managed to speak to her. In the end, he, sailor like, told her that his heart was hers—"Would she take him?" When he heard how hopeless his plea was, he descended to his cabin and returned with a beautiful parrot in a cage, and said "Take this bird; I brought it for my mother. It will remind you of the poor sailor who loved you." She refused his gift, but the sailor sent it to her aunt's house the night before he sailed. When she left Aberdeen to be married, she took the parrot with her on the top of the great carrier's cart that she travelled by from Aberdeen to Huntly, where she left the cart to trudge on foot for nearly thirty miles to her native place, Inveraven. When she started from Aberdeen at midnight, the parrot's cage was carefully wrapped in a Highland plaid, which served to tie it on my mother's back. As she left the town of Huntly, many eyes were turned upon her with the cage on her back. Footsore and weary with her unwonted burden, she reached Dufftown, where she got some refreshment and fed the parrot. Very soon the news of her arrival got wind, and boys and girls flocked to the inn window in the hope of getting a peep at the wonderful bird. Several boys volunteered to carry it and show her the nearest way through the hills. It was late in the afternoon before she emerged from the rugged pass between the Conval



Hills. To her dismay, she noticed that great heavy clouds came rolling over the top of Benrinnes, and before she reached the Moor of Rinachat a dense mist covered the landscape. She tried in vain to find the toll road that passed at a short distance, but she had turned in the wrong direction. After wandering about until it was quite dark, she saw a light in a cottage window, and knocked at the door. After much parley and explanation she was admitted, the woman of the house remarking, "If it hadna been for yer weel-faured face ye wudna come in here the nicht. But fat's that, bairn, that ye ha'e on yer back? Gweed ha'e a care o' me! ye're surely a witch-wife, tae carry a cratur like that. Gang oot o' my door at aince wi' yer evil speerits. Fat has brocht ye tae my door—a puir widow that never did onybody ill?" Like a true Speyside woman, my mother remarked that "oot o' this hoose I winna gang the nicht. Wud ye put oot a puir lost woman tae perish in the moss because she has a puir hairmless parrot on her back?" The bairns began to peep at "the bonny bird," as they called it, and by and by the mother was convinced that it was no evil omen.

Next morning the sun rose without a cloud. Before leaving the cottage my mother pressed payment upon her hostess, but she absolutely refused to take it, saying, "Gweed forgi'e me! I took ye for ane o' yon caird-queans that gang aboot tellin' fortunes for bawbees." After bestowing her bounty upon the bairns, my mother, with the cage upon her back, reached her father's house in Inveraven in due time. The news soon spread that Mary Stuart had come home to be married, and brought "such a funny bird" home with her that could speak. Katie Drum, a celebrated "daft wife" that roamed the country round, came amongst the rest to see it. Katie carried a short stick in her hand, and a great pouch hung at her side filled with scraps of waste paper, which she called "sharges." She declared that everyone she met was indebted to her, and served them with a "sharge." She attended all the fairs in the district. On one occasion, at a Peter Fair, she espied General Grant of Ballindalloch; she went up to him and presented him with a "sharge." The General said, "Go away, you impudent woman." "Weel, then," said Katie, "if ye'll nae tak' a 'sharge,' tak' that," hitting the General a good rap on the knuckles with her short stick. When she saw the

parrot and heard it speak, she lifted up her hands in astonishment and said, "Mary, is that ane o' the folk that live ower the sea, or is't a fairy that ye catched on yer wy hame through the Glacks, far the fairies bide? If I had been a God-fearin' man like yer father, Jeems Stuart, I wudna latten the cratur come ower my doorstane."

When my mother's "plenishing" was carried down Speyside to her new home in the Burnside of Rothies, the parrot sat proudly perched on the top of the cart. For seven successive summers she was hung out every fine day on a nail in the front wall, facing the grey remnant of the old Castle of Rothies. On the morning of the 3rd of August, 1829, she was hung out as usual. Very soon she began to scream in a way that betokened fear. My mother being confined, was unable to ascertain the cause of her alarm. After being brought indoors, she still showed fright, and it was noticed that a strange, blue, lurid light was hanging over the top of Benaigen, and the air had a peculiar, sultry feeling. Very soon large raindrops began to fall heavily, but no one dreamed of the overwhelming calamity that was close at hand. All through the following night rain fell in torrents, and when morning broke it was seen that the burn in front of my father's house had overflowed its banks. The village of Rothies is intersected by two impetuous mountain burns, which when in spate come rushing down with great force. My father being a bee-keeper, had taken his skeps to the heather. Early in the morning he went to look after their safety, placing two burns between him and his home. When he got to the back burn, which runs at the east end of the town, he found that the parapets of the bridge had been swept away. Several other men like himself were there. Cut off from their homes, and made desperate by the thought that their wives and families were in danger of being swept away with their houses, they arm in arm rushed over the broken arch of the bridge, to be confronted by a new danger. The water of the middle burn, being impeded by the bridge, left its course and came rushing along the New Street with a force that no one could breast. Through a side lane they were able to reach the Breich Street and get to their homes in safety. In the meantime neighbours had cut turf and placed it against the doors of my father's house to prevent the water from entering, but all was of no avail. The water

rose to the window-sills, and came rushing in through holes in the wall. One bed was placed upon another to raise my mother above the water, with her infant in her arms. The poor parrot was lifted up beside her, screaming with fear, intermingled with the crying of the terror-stricken narrator of this scene. Though less than five years of age at the time, he can still remember the agony of that fearful time. Fortunately there was a back door to the house, but it was blocked by beds and presses. Shortly after my father's arrival, the house opposite, that stood with its back to the burn, gave way with a crash. The thatch and timbers of the roof were hurled against the front of our house, blocking the light of the windows. At this supreme moment the well-known voice of Jamie Gordon was heard calling out, "Come, men, for the Lord's sake, an' save the puir wife an' her bairn. Knock the door in Johnnie Forsyth, rin for yer muckle aix; ye ken foo tae hanle't." Before Johnnie had time to return, the brawny arm of Archie Leslie with his felling axe very soon broke in the door. The beds and presses were greater obstacles, but they were soon torn in pieces and flung to the devouring flood. My mother and her child were carried safely out amidst the congratulations of her neighbours. I was also carried out more dead than alive.

The minister, old Mr. Cruickshank, was there with his kindly words of comfort. He ordered her to be carried at once to the Manse, but before she could get there a wall at the top of the garden had to be surmounted. A ladder was procured, and she was carried safely to the top, being placed in a chair. Two stalwart men carried her safely to the Manse through the garden. Terror-stricken as I had been, I never forgot the impression that garden left upon my mind. I had no doubt heard of the Garden of Eden. When I saw the trees and bushes laden with fruit of all kinds, I imagined that it must indeed be the Eden that I had heard about. We got a kind and warm welcome from the minister's wife, although folks said that she was "verra different fae the minister" in her respect for the poor. She was reported to have said on one occasion to a guest who at breakfast praised the quality of the eggs, "Ay," said she, "eggs are a very dainty bit, but they are common amongst poor folk." We had no reason to believe this ill-natured report, for eggs were amongst the dainties we feasted on. Having no family of her own, Mrs.

Cruickshank took great interest in me. Every morning a great flock of poultry came to be fed by her on the green in front of the Manse door. She never failed to take me to assist at this interesting function. The first time that I appeared on the scene the great fiendish turkey cock flew at my bare feet and legs. Terror-stricken, I ran to the kitchen door for safety.

After we left home the poor parrot was carried out and placed amongst the swine that had been set free to prevent them being drowned in their styes. One of them put its nose into Jenny Dustan's treacle-pot, upsetting it, and smearing its face with the contents. It ran screaming amongst the affrighted hens, overturning the parrot's cage. The poor bird ultimately followed us to the Manse. Much to the grief of my mother, the parrot began to droop, and died in a few days. The kindly old minister sympathised with my mother in her loss of so interesting a companion. After ten days' sojourn at the Manse, we left its hospitable roof to return to our desolate home.

It is utterly impossible to convey to the reader a full description of the scene of ruin that met our eyes. The gravel and stones which had been piled up by the flood against the front of our house had been thrown back upon the *debris* that filled the roadway, obscuring the light of the windows, and rendering the inside of the house dark and dismal. The floors were a quagmire; boards were laid along the passages to prevent our sinking in them. "Ben the hoose" the kindly neighbours had tried to light a fire upon the sodden hearth, but they failed in their purpose. The peats were so wet and sodden that they would not burn. When Jamie Gordon appeared he brought both warmth and cheerfulness, for he carried a girdle with a burning fire upon it, which he hung on "the crook" in the fireplace, with the remark, "It's a caul' hame for ye, Mary, but as lang's there's a stick in Jamie Gordon's hoose ye'll nae want a fire."

As soon as it was possible after our return home, we ascended the Castle Hill to view the desolation around. When Nehemiah went round the walls of Jerusalem to view the ruins thereof, he must have seen some picturesqueness in the decay and ruins of that once magnificent city; but the scene that met our eyes had no redeeming feature. Sir T. Dick Lauder, in his book "The Moray Floods," gives a very graphic account of the devastation

wrought in and around Rothes, but no pen could describe the utter desolation of the scene that we looked upon. Below us lay the fertile and once beautiful haugh of Rothes. The rich crops of corn and hay that made it a joy to look upon were buried beneath stones and gravel or swept to the sea by the raging flood. The ruins of Widow Riach's farm-house at the upper end of the haugh completed the picture of desolation. The village houses seemed deserted, and their straw thatched roofs looked like clay huts. The crops in the gardens lay beaten to the earth. A great chasm of stones and gravel marked the course of the burn that divides the village into two parts. The bridge that crossed it was entirely swept away, thus preventing communication by wheeled vehicles from either side. On the opposite side of the river the beautifully wooded banks below Arndilly were converted in many places into naked yellow crags. In whatever direction our eyes were turned nothing but ruin and desolation was seen.

The event had such a depressing effect upon my mother that she lost her usual cheerful spirits, and the dampness of the house affected her health. My father therefore decided to go up to Aberlour and "tak' aff" one of the feus that were at the time being granted by the laird of Elchies in the newly laid out village of Charlestown. He set to work at once to erect a house upon his newly acquired stance, where in due time my mother and all her belongings were brought to spend the remainder of her life. "The fitting" is so deeply engraven upon the writer's mind that time cannot efface it. Having been placed in the first cart of the procession, we left the door of our early home amidst the tears and blessings of our friends and neighbours. To me the first great terror of the journey was the crossing of the temporary wooden bridge thrown over the burn. On leaving the village we passed the ruins of Widow Riach's farm. Every step brought to view trees torn up by the roots, many of them hanging from the tops of standing trees. In passing the beautiful and once fertile haugh of Danda-leith our hearts grew sad at the sight of such desolation. A great number of men were employed in cutting deep trenches to bury the stones and gravel that covered the ground, in many places to a depth of two or three feet. At the present day I have not forgotten the terror that I felt in passing under the rocks and over the iron bridge of Craigellachie. My terror was

increased when we crossed the airy wooden structure that united the bridge to the high road. Although the bridge itself was not injured by the flood, at the southern end it made a deep channel, over which for the time the wooden structure referred to was erected. So great was the effect upon the imagination and boyish mind of the writer, that a year or two after, while on his way to visit his native place, nothing would persuade him to walk across the bridge on his feet. He is even now not ashamed to tell the reader that he crossed upon his hands and knees.

## CHAPTER II.

### "THE HOOSE-HEATIN'."

"And say, without our hopes, without our fears,  
Without the home that plighted love endears,  
Without the smile from partial beauty won,  
Oh, what were man?—a world without a sun!"

IN the year 1812, Charles Grant, laird of Elchies, founded the village of Charlestown by granting feus on liberal terms, with four acres of land attached. In the year 1830 most of the sites had been allotted, only one corner at the upper end of the village being left vacant. My father took off one of the stances there, and started at once to build upon it. The house was built back some distance from the high road, so that the garden might be in front of it. On a dull October day we landed in the village to take possession of our new home. Eighteen years had elapsed since the first house was built in the village, and during that time most of the feuars had only built one house upon their allotments, thus making a long, straggling street. In the ugly open gaps between the houses lay pools of stagnant water. At that time the village was no ideal "Auburn." The contrast of its appearance at the present day is so great that only those who lived in it in 1830 can realise it. Although the village escaped being submerged by "the flood," the water rose to near the level of the street. A stone stood for a number of years at the bottom of the old schoolhouse garden to mark the height to which the water rose. The great devastation caused by it is still to be seen. So entirely was the greater part of the minister's beautiful glebe land swept away that it has never been reclaimed. For many years after the spate, when the river was in flood, the overflow water ran down a channel where the present railway station stands, and it was no uncommon thing for salmon to be caught in the pools left behind after a flood. For several years a stream from the lower end of the "Boat Hole"

passed the back of the church, so the little haugh behind the village was named "The Isle."

Soon after our "hame-comin'," my father and mother being considered "gey genteel folks," it was deemed the genteel thing to "heat the hoose," and the presence of the minister was requisitioned to consecrate our "new dwallin'." It was considered a great honour to the family when he took the head of the table, and he even consented to ladle out the punch. It was said that upon social occasions of this kind, when he presided at the punch-bowl he was wont to skim it for any of the party that he wished to "fill fou." Whether he did so or not on the happy occasion here referred to, I cannot say, but before he departed some of the company "werna feart tae speak their minds afore the minister." Eppie Shearer, my father's aunt, even went the length of heckling him on the doctrine of works and grace. He took it all in good part, being used, as he afterwards said, to Eppie's tongue. In acknowledgement of her abilities in this line, he styled her "Witty Eppie," an affront that she never forgave. When Bailie Laing, a far awa' frien' (through his wife) of my father's, crossed swords with the minister, the encounter was fought out to the bitter end. Bailie Laing was a man of great energy. He did not scruple to speak his mind even to the minister. As a proof of this, one day the minister met the Bailie driving his ass along the road, and saluted him with, "Weel, William, hoo are ye the day, and hoo's the ass?" "I'm verra weel, sir; but the ass wud be the better if ye paid me that accoont that's been awin' me mair than three years," retorted the Bailie. An ass was not at that time a very common beast of burden in the North. Few of the earlier inhabitants of the village could compare with Bailie Laing in energy and industry. When he built his first house, a great part of the stones were carried upon a hand barrow by him and his wife from the bed of the Spey. As soon as it was habitable he set up a shop in it, and sold all kinds of wares, from a pin to a ploughshare. Starting as the first carrier between the village and Elgin, he was able to supply his customers with cheap goods. The name of Bailie Laing deserves to be remembered. From a humble beginning he died possessed of many houses in the village. When the history of its deceased bailies is written, none of them will



stand higher in the record than William Laing. Had he been a citizen of "famous London town" he would have certainly filled the civic chair. Another villager of note honoured the feast—"Kirkton," as he was familiarly called, having been tenant of The Kirkton. His farm was broken up and the land portioned out to feuars. He selected one of the most eligible sites in the village, and built upon it, I believe, the first two houses erected in the place. The minister having discovered his "qualities," made him an elder, and dubbed him "The Governor." Whether he possessed the governing faculty or not, he had a profound belief in the existence of fairies. He told me that when he went to "fother the beasts" of a winter's night at Kirkton he could plainly hear the fairies playing the fiddle in "The Shean," half-a-mile distant.

But none of the party has left upon the writer's memory so lasting an impression as old Saunders Stewart, the miller. A deadly feud existed between him and the minister. At the time this was unknown to my father, and he was much relieved when Saunders took "the gait for hame." From that time and for some years after I literally sat at the old miller's feet listening to his old historical and weird stories. His language was more forcible than polished, not at all suited for the ears of a young boy, but he had a strange attraction for me. One of the strangest traits displayed in his otherwise irreverent mind was a belief in fatalism. He related the following story with a solemnity that showed the conviction of its truth upon his mind:—"There was once a minister of Aberlour that had a son born to him—an uncommon fine bairn. He consulted the stars at the time of his birth, and was horrified to find it revealed that the child would die by drowning. To prevent this, he determined that the boy should never leave his presence. "Ae day," said the miller, "the minister cam' up tae this verra mill tae speak tae the miller aboot takin' ower muckle muter fae the puir folk. He was sae angry that he forgot that the bairn had slippit oot o' his han', an' he never missed him till the miller's dochter cam' runnin' in tae say that the bairn was ower the wheel."

Here in Cleveland the very same legend was told to me by an ancient Yorkshire dame at her cottage fireside. "You'll have no doubt heard how this place got its name—Osmotherly." I owned

that I was ignorant on the subject. "You have heard of King Oswald. He had a son born to him. He was named after his father, but it was prophesied by wise men at the time of his birth that he would be drowned. To prevent this his mother never allowed him to leave her side. One beautiful summer day she took him out to yon green hill to play. As she knew that there was no water, she lay down and fell asleep. When she awoke she was horrified to see him lying drowned in a well that no one had ever seen there before. That's how this place got its name. It stands upon the place where Oswald's mother lay." This shows how widespread these old legends were, and how deeply they were imprinted upon the minds of people whose literary knowledge consisted for the most part of oral tradition and fire-side stories.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE OLD MILLER.

"The stiffest o' them a' he bow'd  
The bauldest o' them a' he cow'd ;  
They durst nae mair than he allowed—  
That was a law ;  
We've lost a birkie weel worth gowd—  
Sandy's awa'."

IT has been often said that the scenery amid which a man dwells has an effect in forming his mind and character, even to the moulding of his features. No doubt there is truth in this to a certain extent. Around the old "Kirkton Mill" of Aberlour there was a combination of scenery well calculated to impress the dullest mind, but it seemed to have made very little impression on the mind or features of "The Old Miller." Nature in all her beauty surrounded the spot where stood the busy mill, whose ceaseless wheel with splashing sound made music to the scene around, sheltered from the north by a brae draped with weeping birch trees, and so steep that the branches hung like curtains over the belt of mingled underwood that skirted its base. Higher up the burn the mountain ash, the sloe, and hazel divided "the wards" into green, sylvan glades, where in early spring the primrose, the wood anemone, and other gems decked the green sward. As a background to the picture, the Linn of Ruthrie is seen tumbling over the edge of a rugged rock, leaping from one ledge to another to the pool below, into whose depth the looker-on shudders to gaze. There are many waterfalls in Scotland far grander and more awe-inspiring than the Linn of Ruthrie, but seen when the burn is in flood the sight is very fine. The crags on either side of the falls are crowned with weeping birches, some of them hanging by their roots from fissures in the rocks, while the blaeberry and the beech and oak ferns all combine to make the Linn of Ruthrie a pleasing if not an impressive picture. "The Little Linn," a few yards higher up the burn, is

wanting in the picturesque features of the fall below. When the burn is low the water rushes down a narrow channel in the face of the rock, which is beautifully water-worn. In the rocks around the fall many holes have been formed by the action of the water. In the school days of the writer these were designated "The Cups and Saucers," "The Muckle and Little Kail-Pots," while one deep hole, very smooth and round, was known as "The Devil's Punch-Bowl."

The flood of '29 rushed over these waterfalls with terrific force, carrying with it great boulder stones that lay in the course of the burn between Benrinnes and the falls. One great boulder the size of a hay cock lay stranded opposite the mill. The old miller, in narrating the incidents of that terrible event, said "when it fell ower the Linn, an' cam' rummellin' doon the burn, it shook the verra mill an' the hoose." No better illustration of the force of that great flood could be seen anywhere.

Although "The Miller" had no eye for the natural beauty of his surroundings, it had some unseen influence upon his mind. The sounds of nature in the night time seemed to impress his mind greatly. When the mill was "set" he would listen with a sort of awe to the souging of the burn and the din of the water falling over the Linn, and remark, "Ay, ay, lathey, it's wonnerfu'; we never hear that eerie soon's in the day time." When seated by the hearth in his high-backed oak chair he looked very much like the effigy of one of those gods that are seen in the heathen temples of India. A round Highland bonnet, without a brim covered his head, and it seemed as if it had become attached to the scalp, for I never saw his head bare. His stolid, rudy face was square and expressionless, until the thought of some affront that he had received came across his mind. Then a scowl would pass over his features, and he would burst forth indignantly, prefacing every narrative with "L—d liken as it were, lathey."

He never tired of telling the following adventure:—"Ae aifterneen—it was gey weel on in hairst—a great muckle chiel wi' a gaud (goad) in his han' cam' tae the mill door an' cries oot, 'Miller, come doon tae the foord; the owsen's stucken there, an' the diel himsel' winna move them.' Sae doon I gangs, an' there, sure eneuch, was aul' General Grant o' Ballindalloch's sax owsen,

wi' a waggon load o' coal fae Germuch, stuck fast in the foord (the new brig ower the burn wasna biggit then). 'Fat the deil's the maitter?' says I; 'can ye nae get them oot o' the burn, ye block-head?' 'Na, na,' said the gaudsman, 'we'll try nae mair. Black Peter's bewitched sin' he cam' intae the pairish o' Aiberlour. He cam' spankin' through the Mill Foord, an' here he's fast in this bit burn. Someane's played their cantrips on him.' Wi' that I snaps the gaud oot o' his han' an' says, 'Get oot o' the gait, ye muckle feel, or I'll lay the gaud on yer ain back!' But, L—d liken as it were, that dour deevil o' a beast, Black Peter, wadna move a fit if I had stickit him wi' the sharp en' o' the gaud. The minister an' his man, Willie Stewart, an' Jock More, the bellman, were stan'in' by. The minister says tae me, 'Saunders, the deevil's nae likely tae come an' help ye. I would gi'e ower callin' on him.' L—d liken as it were. I just glowered at him, an' says I, 'He's ower busy at the Manse tae help onybody but the minister.' Sae aifter we had fochten wi' the brute for mair than an' oor, I bethinks me an' gets a bundle o' breem cowes (broom bushes), an' sets fire tae them anaith the belly o' the black deevil. That seen made him flee up the brae roarin' like a mad bull."

General James Grant of Ballindalloch succeeded to the estate on the death of his nephew, Major William Grant, in 1770. He died at Ballindalloch on the 13th of April, 1806, at the age of 86. Having no children, he was succeeded by his maternal grand-nephew, George Macpherson, Esq. of Invereshie, who assumed the name of Grant, and was created a baronet in 1838. Of all the many Grants of Strathspey that have risen to high distinction in the army, none of them has left a longer or more distinguished record than General Grant of Ballindalloch. My maternal grandmother was a servant in the Castle during his lifetime. He brought home from Florida two black servants, who became a terror to all the maid-servants. On one occasion the General heard one of them screaming on a back staircase. He rushed to her and found one of the "blacks." The General collared him, got his cane, and laid it on to the back of the culprit till he howled in such a way that all the inmates were alarmed. At the time of his death he was Governor of Stirling Castle. At his own request his remains were buried in a favourite spot at that time called "The Bowmoon" or "Bowmeen." A handsome

monument, with suitable inscription, marks the place of his interment. The different branches of the Clan Grant were distinguished one from another by territorial names. The Ballindalloch branch were commonly called "Craig-Achrochean Grants."

The song of "Roy's Wife o' Aldivalloch" was written by a Mrs. Grant of Carron. Her maiden name was Grant, and she was born near Aberlour about 1745. Mr. Grant of Carron, whose wife she became about 1763, was her cousin. As far as can be ascertained, the above song was the only one she composed. Numerous as the Grants of Strathspey are at the present time, they were still more numerous at the time when Alexander Boswell wrote his famous verses on them :—

" Come the Grants of Tullochgorum,  
Wi' their pipers gaun before 'em,  
Proud the mothers are that bore 'em,  
    Feedle-fa-fum.  
Next the Grants of Rothiemurchus,  
Every man his sword and dirk has,  
Every man as proud's a Turk is,  
    Tweedle-da-dum.

## CHAPTER IV.

### HATTON AND THE FAIRIES.

"Oh, where do fairies hide their heads  
When snow lies on the hills,  
When frost has spoiled their mossy beds  
And crystallized their rills?"

ON a winter's night, when the wind swept down the burn and howled around the chimney-head like the wailing of a lost spirit, the miller was at his best. Seated beside the great open hearth, whereon lay a pile of the husks winnowed from newly-dried corn, which burned like tinder, the old man with a slender iron rod kept constantly stirring them into flame, which threw his shadow into grotesque forms upon the wall behind. He would then hand the rod to me while he related his stories and told his family history, and how his grandfather fought and fled from the fatal field of Culloden, and lay hiding for many a day in what was called "The Brock-hole," a cave in the brae above the mill. He seemed to have held his own father in little esteem. He had four wives, and the son set forth their merits and demerits in the following couplet:—

"First he got a wife, an' syne he got anither,  
Then he got the deevil, an' then he got my mither."

The evening's entertainment finished generally with a story of a supernatural kind. The story of Hatton being trepanned by the fairies on his way home from the mill was often rehearsed. At that time it was the custom amongst farmers to bring their grain to the mill, and stay there until the grinding was finished. The servant girls were taken to sift the meal. When the melder was large and the water scant, it was often late before they finished and left with the newly-made meal for home, with the girls seated on the carts. While the grinding went on, the miller and the farmer washed the dust out of their throats with something stronger than meal and water. It must have been upon an

occasion of this kind that Hatton, as related by the miller, "fell in wi' the fairies." The miller was no stranger to the pranks of the green-coated gentry, for, said he, "I often wauken up in the nicht an' hear the wheel gaun roon'. I ken brawly fa's turned on the water, but they never brack onything, an' I never heed their frolicks; they never fash mysel'. Ay, but Hatton couldna tell the same tale. It was verra late, I've heard them say, afore his melder was finished—weel on tae twal' o'clock when the lasses took aff their dusty duds an' mountit the cairts at the mill door. Hatton says tae them, 'Gang yer wa's; I'll tak' the near cut by Stripeside an' Hillockhead, an' be hame afore ye.' But fan the cairts got hame there was nae Hatton tae be seen. The guidwife had been confined the day afore, an' the howdie said, 'Ye mauna tell the guidwife. Ane o' ye gang doon the gait an' try an' fin' him.' Hatton's man gaed doon the fitpath till he cam' tae 'The Shean.' He thocht he saw a licht shinin' oot o' a hole in the side o't. Fan he cam' nearer he saw it was a door, an' there, sure eneuch, stood Hatton, crackin' his thooms abeen his head an' jumpin' like an antick. The man gaed up tae him an' laid his han' on his shoulder, an' said, 'Come awa' hame, Hatton; the guidwife is wearyin' for ye.' 'Bide a wee, man,' said Hatton; 'fat the deil's a' the hurry? Wait till the spring's finished.' The man waited, but the music never stoppit. While the 'dancers quick an' quicker flew,' Hatton clappit his han's an' roared oot, 'Weel dune, little mannie; gang at it wi' the little woman.' This was said in praise o' a little mannie dressed in a green coat wi' yallow kneebreeks, blue stockin's, an' siller buckles on his sheen. The man saw that Hatton was creepin' farer ben, so he made a last effort tae pull him oot, but a' in vain. 'Deil ae fit will I gang oot o' this till the spring's finished an' the dancin's deen,' said Hatton. Fan the man gaed hame an' telt his tale, the howdy said truly that 'they wud see nae mair o' Hatton for a twalmonth an' a' day.' At the en' o' that time the man gaed back, an' there, sure eneuch, he saw Hatton still stan'in' inside the door. The man pulled him oot by main force, an' as seen as he was ootside the door the spell was broken. On his wy hame Hatton remarkit that he was 'gettin' gey hungry.' 'Nae wonner,' said the man; 'ye've stood there for a hale year.' 'Dae ye think,' said Hatton, 'that I'm a feel a'thegither? They hadna finished the



spring, man.' When he got hame an' saw the bairn that was born the day afore he gaed tae the mill, he was convinced that he had been trepanned by the fairies."

Whether the round, conical mound called "The Shean," that stands a little distance below the farm of the Hatton, is natural or artificial has not been satisfactorily decided, but it is a conspicuous object in the parish. There is no doubt that round about on the farm of Hatton there is clear evidence of Druidical remains and burial mounds and cairns. Where now stands the farm house a "ha'" had stood, hence the name of Ha-ton.

## CHAPTER V.

### VILLAGE WORTHIES.

"No more that meek and suppliant look in prayer  
Nor the pure faith to give it force are there ;  
But he is blest, and I lament no more  
A wise, good man, contented to be poor."

IF Christian rectitude and moral worth is the true standard of man, the Parish of Aberlour possessed such men. Two of them, pre-eminent for their unobtrusive piety, deserve to be remembered, for their names are certainly written in that book which will be brought forth at the great assize, when judgment will be passed upon all men according as it is written therein. James Grant and William Shearer, the one a shoemaker and the other a weaver, were members of a religious body called Seceders. Unlike many sects of the present day, they had none of that clamorous, aggressive self-glorification that we hear so much of now-a-days. When they prayed they entered into their closets and "shut the door." They prayed in secret, but it was openly known, and the influence of their prayers was a rebuke to many around them who neglected the good old habit once so prevalent in Scotland—family prayer.

It was a privilege to be permitted (as the writer was) to spend the long winter evenings in the shoemaker's shop. At that time there was no Sunday school, reading room, night school, or any society for the intellectual improvement of boys or young men in the parish. Literature of any kind was beyond their reach. Even books were a very scarce commodity. When one reads that Burns and Janet Hamilton had the writings of our great classic authors in their libraries, we see what an advantage they had over the youths of many a northern parish, whose literature consisted of the Scriptures and a few dry religious books, many of them unattractive to the young. There was a certain sort of literature of a very objectionable kind carried about the country by chapmen, from whom this class of books derived the

name of "chap-books." Many of them were coarse and vulgar in the extreme, with a broad humour very detrimental to the morals of the young, who eagerly read them for lack of better entertainment. I am sorry to say it, but Aberdeen has much to answer for in the production of "chap-books" and vulgar ballads, which generally had a pictorial heading of the rudest kind. It is utterly impossible for the young people of the present day to fully appreciate the advantages they possess over the youths of a northern parish sixty years ago. Illustrated periodical literature was a thing unknown to them at that time. An enterprising merchant, who made occasional visits to London, brought home from there a first copy of the *Illustrated London News*. He kept the village post-office, and hundreds of people crowded to the shop to look at this "world's wonder."

The writer has seen a goodly number of pictures and illustrated periodicals since he looked at that first copy of the *Illustrated London News*, but the picture that has left the deepest impression on his mind was a woodcut plastered on the wall above the fireplace in James Grant's shop. It represented the seven stages of a man's life. On the left hand, the boy, gleeful and buoyant, stood upon the first ascending step; step by step he ascended until he stood upon a platform erect in the vigour of manhood. On the right, he descended step by step until he reached the lowest one. There he stood, staff in hand, bowed and decrepit, ready to drop into the grave. Such a picture had no need of an inscription beneath it.

When quite a little boy, the writer had gathered together a varied store of inartistic, rude pictures from the fly leaves of "chap-books" and ballads. So greatly were they prized by him that they were pasted on the inside of a "muckle claes kist." On Sundays, when the parlour was occupied, permission was granted to lift the kist lid and display the picture gallery for the entertainment of the assembled family. Every new addition to the collection was looked upon as a priceless treasure. Besides the pictorial adornment of the lid, the kist contained other family treasures that were looked upon with wonder and admiration. It contained a Leghorn bonnet of enormous dimensions, given to my mother by her aunt, along with a brown bombazine gown, which had a long tasselled cord to tie round the waist. The

shoulders were adorned with epaulets, like a soldier's coat, with tassels depending from them. These treasures were a useless legacy to my mother, being considered "ower braw for a puir man's wife to wear," for she never had a straw bonnet on her head, being always content to wear a pleated muslin mutch with a broad ribbon. The sight of these and other family treasures never failed to remind us that we could claim kindred "wi' great folk."

Another village worthy was James Petrie, familiarly termed "The Dyster." He had been a dyer by trade, and he had made a small competence. He "took up hoose" in Aberlour, with his sister Eppie as housekeeper, neither of them having ever been married. Each had their department in the work of the household, which they carried on by ceaseless labour and economy. During the summer months Eppie spent her time in herding the cow and the stirk. She carried with her a bundle of wool, which she span with an ancient spindle that she carried at her apron string. Her brother employed his time in tilling and tending his acres. To assist him in his work he had a horse named Tommy. If it were possible to believe in the doctrine of transmigration, he must have been the spirit of some sly, cunning dodger sent into the world to bamboozle and perplex the poor old "Dyster." He was a great, powerful brute, with flowing mane and great hairy fetlocks. His skin had a silken gloss, and he was as fat as a well-fed alderman. His master would not have blinders on his bridle because they "preventit the puir dumb beast fae seein' fat was ahin' him," nor would he have a bit "pit in the puir creatur's moo." The eyes of Tommy bespoke the spirit that was in him. You had only to look into their depths to see that the brute was possessed of more than human cunning and penetration. In the morning, when James tried to bridle him, he refused to have the bridle put on. On such occasions the poor "Dyster" tried to coax him with "Hoot-toot, Tommy, fat's the maitter wi' ye this mornin'! Come, come, lat the bridle on. We're nae gaun tae the peats this mornin'; only up tae Allachie for a puckle gress." If it did not suit Tommy, he would not leave the stable for days. Sometimes he got as far as the door and stood there for hours. At other times he came out, but refused to be yoked to the cart, and he had to be led back to the stable, James remarking, "Hoot-toot,

Tommy ; ye're nae gaun tae be lazy ; ye'll dee't the morn."

On one occasion James had business in Elgin. Tommy was surprised into submission by the novelty of James mounting on his back. They started early in the morning on their journey. At midnight they had only got as far as the Gedloch, in the Glen of Rothes. The "Old Baker," who dwelt in a cottage there, was a character known far and wide for his drollery and eccentricities. A baker by trade, he kept at one time a public-house in the village of Rothes known as "The Sclaty Inn," so called from being the first house in the New Street of Rothes that was covered with slates. He went to all the fairs and markets round about. "The Baker's" tent was well patronised. The best fun of the fair was there. No clown that ever trod the stage could have acted his part better than did "The Baker" o' Rothes. He generally stood at his tent door with a big-bellied bottle, treating friends and strangers alike to a dram and a taste of his drollery. His free hospitality drove him from "The Sclaty Inn" to the barren Glen of Rothes, where he built a cottage "an' selt a dram." "Seein' 'The Dyster'" (as he termed him) "stanin' in front o' my hoose, at twal' o'clock at nicht upon a muckle black horse, I said 'Fa are ye seekin' the nicht, man ? If ye're nae an aul' gager, ye maun be Aul' Sandy himsel' come fae Spynie.'" It took two days to accomplish what James termed his weary ride to Elgin. He was a kind and neighbourly man, and every loon in the village had reason to remember him, for he lent them his hobby-horse for their Christmas diversions. They requited his kindness by running off with his cart and leaving it stranded in the burn, and every time that they saw Tommy take "the stoops" on the village street they roared with laughter, calling, "Tak' Tommy oot, an' tak' the shafts yersel'."

## CHAPTER VI.

### "THE BANKER."

"How happy is he born and taught  
That serveth not another's will ;  
Whose armour is his honest thought,  
And simple truth his utmost skill ;  
Whose passions not his masters are,  
Whose soul is still prepared for death."

THE great Apostle of the Gentiles says, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." If this great truth were more generally recognised and acted upon, the lives of many men would be more fruitful for good.

No man that has lived in the Parish of Aberlour has earned such a high reputation for integrity and usefulness as did the late William Stuart, more widely known as "The Banker." He began life in the village as a general merchant. Being a shrewd, clear-sighted man, he very soon acquired the reputation of being "siccar," but his goods were of the best quality if his price was high. Through his business he gradually became acquainted with the domestic circumstances of his customers, and they instinctively recognised in him a capacity for practical wisdom in worldly matters which was new to a people whose lives were spent in the circumscribed area of an isolated parish. As years passed on, his influence widened, and eventually he became a power for good that young and old, rich and poor recognised. Like the Apostle Paul, his bodily presence had no share in the influence that he wielded in the parish. He was low in stature, and suffered from a bronchial complaint so severe at times that he was often at death's door. Even under such circumstances he was ever ready to give advice and help to all who came to seek it.

With the exception of church affairs, he took no public share in the discussions that went on around him, yet his influence was felt in them. He was selected to fill the first bank agency established in Aberlour. In that capacity his opportunities of doing

good were extended, and his help was widely and judiciously given to those who could not help themselves. No small share of the prosperity of the parish is due to him. The secret of his great influence lay in his staunch integrity. He had often to tell his customers, and those who sought his help and advice, hard and disagreeable truths; but he never qualified the truth to please either rich or poor. Having never married, his household was presided over by his cousin, who had acted in that capacity for his father, the "Governor" referred to in another chapter, and whose "qualities" had descended to his son, who in turn wielded a dispensing power in the parish far beyond that exercised by the old "Governor."

If domestic war raged in a household, "The Banker's" voice stilled the tumult and proclaimed peace. If financial difficulties threatened to overwhelm a family, they sought the same help and advice. In all emergencies he was ready to do and dare. In some cases his interference was resented with abuse. Threats of personal danger did not deter him from protecting a widow woman in the parish whose life was in jeopardy, from refusing to wed an old demented man who declared that she had bewitched him. Perhaps his most thankless work was protecting people who could or would not care for themselves and their own interests. When he laid his restraining hand upon them, they gave him abuse in return, but nothing prevented him from doing what he considered his duty.

There was one "object" who lived for a number of years in the village that he took a special interest in, and who was known over the district as "Tommy Tethers." His personal appearance was grotesque in the extreme. His advent was a surprise to the parish. No one in it had ever seen or heard of him before the day that he entered unbidden and unseen into my father's house, and seated himself by the fireside. When my mother entered he greeted her with, "Weel, mistress, hoo is she to-day? She likes ta look o' ye weel. She wants a bed, an' she'll pay ye for't." My mother looked with fear and consternation upon the creature that had come uncereemoniously and quartered himself in her house. In personal appearance he resembled a mis-shapen ourang-outang. His head was covered with a grey nightcap, from underneath which two tufts of hair, of the same colour as the cap, hung down to his

"lantern chafts," which were constantly in motion munching as monkeys do. His small grey eyes had a hungry, wolfish look that bespoke greed and cunning. His mis-shapen body was clad in coarse homespun plaiding, and when he rose up to walk it was seen that one of his legs was shorter by six inches than the other. Such was the appearance of "the man in possession." In my father's absence my mother sent for "The Merchant," who closely interrogated the new parishioner, but all that he could get out of him definitely was, "She is come to live in this place. She likes it, an'll pay for onything she gets when she sells her tows." From that time till the day of his death he made his home in the village, travelling far and near to sell his hair tethers and sculls or baskets. The last-named articles he often carried on his head, his back being laden with hair ropes. As he limped along, it would be impossible to have conceived a more grotesque sight than the baboon-like face of the dwarf peering from under a bundle of ill-made baskets. When he died, in what had been at one time the cow-byre of the old manse, the late Dr. Sellar proposed that the dirty rags taken off his body should be burned. Some one suggested that the sort of jerkin or under-vest that he wore should be torn open. It was composed of legs of old stockings, one laid upon another until it was an inch in thickness. In tearing it to pieces, a bank deposit receipt for over one hundred pounds was found laid flat between two stocking legs. Silver money made up in parcels was also found hidden away in his wretched den. "The Banker" took care of it until some one was found who had a legal claim to it. He also engaged two men to keep watch and ward over the diminutive body, and keep the rats that infested the place from meddling with it, until the kindly earth covered it from the sight of man.

Whether Mr. Stuart's work and labour in the Parish of Aberlour has been as fruitful in good as he anticipated need not be discussed. His aim was high and his purpose good, if the result has come short of his anticipations. The money that he left for the educational benefit of the parish was given for an object dear to his heart. Circumstances arose which even the wisest could not have foreseen, and in some measure frustrated the object that he had in view. This only showed that "The Banker's" shrewd penetration and worldly wisdom could not see that the best and



wisest arrangement may be upset by future events; but after discounting his failures in foresight there is still a large amount of good left to his credit. During the whole of his life he took great interest in the Church and all its institutions. When the late Dr. Sellar established a Sunday School, he lent him his hearty co-operation in the work. In every object connected with the Church his counsel and advice were sought by the minister and the elders. For many years before his death he held the position of ruling elder. In a limited sense, it may be said that he ruled the parish. A man that acquires such influence, unaided by external accessories, must have had in him qualities of a high order.

“Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,  
So didst thou travel on life's common way  
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.”

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MINISTER.

"He prayeth best that loveth best."

WHEN her late Majesty ascended the Throne, the Rev. Alexander Wilson was minister of the Parish of Aberlour, having held the living for a number of years, and was at the time an old man. The Presbytery had pressed him for some time to get an assistant. His reply was—"The hirelin's nae like the auld shepherd." On the first Sunday after the Queen's coronation he prayed for the defunct King (George IV.). On being told that he prayed for the dead monarch, he remarked—"Weel, weel, he'll nae be better nor waur for onything I said aboot him." On the next Sunday he remembered the Queen, but forgot her name. After a long pause, he prayed—"May the Lord bless and protect her young Majesty, the Queen—the Queen—extraordinary!"

After that incident the minister of Aberlour never ascended the pulpit stairs again. The Presbytery met, and wisely recommended him to accept the services of the Rev. Cosmo Macpherson, who ministered to the people of Aberlour until Mr. Wilson's death. Mr. Wilson was in many respects a typical parish minister of the old school that were fast dying out when our late beloved Queen began to reign. They were generally men of much learning, and many of them sons of humble parents, and they easily adapted themselves to their surroundings and the homely speech of their people. Some of them, like the minister of Aberlour, had a strain of dry humour and sarcasm that came out during intercourse with their parishioners.

Some little time before Mr. Wilson's prayer for the Queen, in the absence of Mr. Asher, the minister of Inveraven, he was elected to fill his pulpit, and on a Sabbath morning, with the help of Annie Dye (his housekeeper), the minister mounted his gig at

the Manse door on his way to preach in the Church of Inveraven. He had only got a short distance from the door when he discovered that he had forgotten his sermon. He stopped the gig and told Willie Stuart (his man servant) to run back and tell Annie to give him the sermon, which she would find on the muckle table. Willie returned and handed it to the minister, who, on looking at it, said, "Bide a wee, Willie, Annie has sent the wrang sermon; this'll never dae. I have hanged Haman twice in the kirk o' Invera'an, and the fowk'll nae ha'e forgotten the last time I preached this sermon. There, tell Annie tae look for 'The Selling of Joseph.'"

During his long ministry, it is impossible to say how many times he had preached his two famous sermons—the hanging of Haman and the selling of Joseph by his brethern to the Midianitish merchants. Every word of the last discourse was as familiar to his hearers as the 23rd Psalm. He laid great stress on the remarkably low price that they sold him for, and how little, when divided into ten parts, each of them would receive, winding up the discourse with—"My friends, it is very evident that Joseph's ten brethren were prepared to part with him at any price; the mere trifle that they received for him is a proof of this."

It is interesting to contrast the material, the social, and the religious privileges that the people of Aberlour enjoy at the present day with the condition of the parish when Mr. Wilson first prayed for our late beloved Sovereign. On my last visit to that much-favoured parish, I looked at the people leaving the churches. As I did so, I was able in some measure to realise the astonishment of poor Rip Van Winkle when he awoke from his long sleep bewildered at the changes that he beheld. As I looked at the men and women as they filled past, I asked myself if they were the descendants of the men and women that listened to the ministry of Mr. Wilson when he made his memorable prayer for our late beloved Sovereign at the commencement of her reign. At that time men went to church clad mostly in home-spun, and many of them wore, like the minister, knee-breeches. The luxury of a calico shirt was beyond the means of many, and they were well content to don one of harden. Women generally wore gowns of linsey-woolsey, and I know that they became them well, for there

is no material made for female wear that is both so warm and wearable. The elder women mostly went "to the kirk" in a long grey freize cloak, with a hood attached, to cover their well-starched mutch should it rain. When her late Majesty ascended the Throne I don't believe there were more than half-a-dozen gingham in the parish. I never look at the beautiful platinotype of Sir Walter Scott's mother but it reminds me of the many staid, solemn, and expressive faces of the women who sat in the Church of Aberlour wearing the mutch on their heads—a picture that impressed itself upon the mind never to be erased. Although the service was often long, cheerless, and listened to with benumbed and frozen feet, the solemn gravity of the worshippers' faces never changed. The men broke the monotony by frequent resorts to the snuffmull, which was handed from pew to pew during the delivery of the sermon.

During the early decades of the last century the spiritual needs of many parishes in the North of Scotland were scantily supplied. In the Church of Aberlour the communion was administered once a year. The parish was divided into four daughs, namely, Carron, Edinville, Allachie, and Aberlour. The communicants in each separate division came on the appointed day to be catechised by the minister in the church and to receive their tokens.

Many stories were current in the parish about the quaint way that Mr. Wilson discharged this function. Any of his flock who displayed knowledge of the Scriptures above their fellows were sure to come under his sarcasm. An aunt of my father's, gifted with a glib and fluent tongue, he dubbed "Witty Eppy." "Wise Willie" was the *sobriquet* that he bestowed on a well-known village character, who lived by himself in a room below the Masonic Hall. Other apartments of the building were occupied by old women. Willie and they were at war constantly. To reach his room he had to pass the door of one of them who was a cripple. The other women used to meet in her room, and as Willie passed the door they often set upon him and belaboured him with the old woman's crutches. No woman was ever admitted into what they called "his stinkin' den." They naturally resented being ignored, and declared that they had "neither peace nor saught wi' him an' his swine; that he got up

at fower in the mornin' tae feed them, an' keepit a pot bilin' a nicht fu' o' rotten taties." The angered spinsters averred they "nicht as weel bide in a swinehoose."

When the noise of battle was heard in the passage that led to Willie's den, the news flew quickly by wireless telegraphy to both ends of the village, and every loon in it went to the relief of the old women. Although Willie had only one eye, he was a host in himself not to be confronted. So we made a rear attack upon Willie's pigstye, set his grunterns flying in all directions, and made our retreat in safety. The matter always ended in both parties "tellin' the minister."

Willie always stated his case in words more forcible than charitable.

"Ever since the world began, a woman was willin' tae dae the deevil's wark, an' they continued at it."

"Ay, ay, Willie," answered the minister; "a wiser man than you has said, 'It is better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and an angry woman,' but wi' a' due deference to Solomon, I tell ye, Willie, they are a very necessary evil. Ye dinna tak' the right way wi' them, Willie, wi' a' your wisdom."

"I hope you are not in the blankets," answered Willie, "but sitting cosily in your great arm chair."

I never see a shock-headed laddie with hands stuck in the pennyless pockets of his short-legged breeks pressing his nose against the plate-glass of a fruiterer's window, feasting his hungry eyes on its tempting contents, but my memory reverts to the old Manse garden, and the time when I used to lean on the dyke that divided it from the kirkyard. There I feasted my eyes on the fruit-laden trees within, their branches bent down with their load of red and golden-coloured apples. The forbidden fruit was very tempting. Some of them did occasionally fall to the ground when they were not blown down by the wind.

Once a year we schoolboys were enabled to sample the minister's gooseberries. When we saw him enter the schoolroom at the unusual hour of half-past nine, and greet the assembled scholars with the usual salutation of "Peace be here," we knew that our services were needed that day to stack his hay. All the bigger boys were released for the day and ordered off at once to the minister's stackyard.

I wonder if there are any of the old boys now alive who, sixty five years ago, "tramped" on the minister's "hay soo" with the writer, and who remember Annie Dye, with her portly figure and rosy face, attended by her two lassies, each carrying a basket full of gooseberries? Apple trees and gooseberry bushes were at that time few and far between in Aberlour.

When the "soo" was finished we filed past the housekeeper, blue bonnet in hand, into which Annie poured a gowpenful of ripe grozets. I have tasted a good many samples of gooseberries since she filled my bonnet, but none had the taste and flavour of the berries that grew in the old Manse garden.

Amongst the church members from the daugh of Carron, Willie Watson, the wizard, never failed to put in an appearance. He was a special object of the minister's sarcasm, owing to the curt and pointed way he answered his questions.

On one occasion he thought he would give Willie a poser by asking him if the Almighty could be the author of evil.

Willie's reply was—"Na, na, he made a' things verra good."

"Then," replied the minister, "Willie, my frien', who created the enemy of mankind, the devil?"

"Hae ye nae deeper question tae speir than that? Ye surely ken that God made him an angel o' licht, an' he made a deevil o' himsel'. Gweed day; I'll be gaun up the brae, if ye hae nae better questions tae speir at me."

Witty Eppie generally went one better than the wizard by turning the tables on the minister and asking him questions. She was great on grace and faith, and she did not scruple to openly declare that the minister was sadly wanting in both. As she was present at nearly every wedding and christening that took place in the parish, she never failed on such occasions to heckle the minister to her heart's content.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MINISTER AND HIS HOUSEKEEPER.

"O, reason the need. Our basest beggars  
Are in the poorest thing superfluous ;  
Allow not nature more than nature needs."

SHAKESPEARE.

WE read and hear a great deal about the excellence and virtue of domestic economy. In this respect the Manse of Aberlour was a model household. The Rev. Mr. Wilson having lived a bachelor life, his domestic affairs were presided over by Annie Dey, his housekeeper. Their requirements were almost wholly supplied from home productions, and the henhouse and the dairy were largely drawn upon. Economy was practised to such an extent that it was said the minister's shoes were blackened with the grime that adhered to the bottom of the kitchen kail-pot. Not having the qualities of "Day & Martin," their gloss was always dingy. But the most remarkable thing about the minister's attire was that it never seemed to grow old. Like the garments of the children of Israel in the Wilderness, it seemed everlasting. Clad in a style that set off his bulky and picturesque appearance, he was a very striking figure as he wended his way along the village street. As he went he never failed to kick off any loose stone from it. My father's garden being below the level of the roadway, some of the stones rolled over into it. The encounters that took place between the minister and him on this account are still fresh in my memory. No Scottish Radical of the present day could have expressed more contempt and less reverence for men in authority than did my father upon such occasions for the minister. Yet they were good friends and neighbours when the storm blew over.

When "the minister cam' doon the street," his movements were eagerly watched by wives and bairns from door and window, but his pastoral calls upon his flock were, "like angels' visits, few and far between." His appearance upon the street never failed to attract attention, clad, as he always was, in a low-crowned,

broad-brimmed hat that, like his garments, never seemed to wear out, a long-tailed black coat and flapped waistcoat encasing his body, and his nether limbs enveloped in velveteen knee-breeches. White worsted stockings and low shoes of a dusty hue completed the everlasting toilet of the minister of Aberlour. It was generally believed that his ruling passion was the collection of one pound notes. At the time of his death four hundred of them were found in the case of the eight-day clock that stood in his sitting-room.

In proof of the economy practised in the Manse, a story is told of how his housekeeper and he arranged the dinner for a young preacher that came to "fill the pulpit." On one occasion an old friend, who had been a pupil of his when he was headmaster of Banff Academy, wrote asking the minister to allow his son, a young probationer, to preach in the Church of Aberlour. Had any other man asked the same favour he would have been refused. "Young chieks," he said, "mak' ower muckle use o' their neives, an' my pulpit winna stan' their duntin'."

For once the application was granted, however, and Annie and the minister sat in conference as to the resources of the household. It was decided that two chickens should be killed for the Sunday dinner. It was doubtful, however, whether the young minister would stay for dinner; if not, only one bird was to be cooked. When the young minister arrived, a short conference was held in the parlour. The minister remarked, "Ye'll bide an' tak' a bite o' dinner after the kirk comes oot." The young man pleaded want of time, as he was to preach in Rothes in the evening. The minister, seeing that he was not likely to stay for dinner, pressed his hospitality warmly, so that the young man consented to "bide for dinner." The minister rose and opened the parlour door and shut it behind him. As he went along the passage that led to the kitchen, he called out, 'Annie, are ye there, woman? Put the ither cock in the pot; he's bidin' yet."

Once a year the minister dispensed his hospitality to the members of the Boys' Friendly Society, which met yearly at Christmas time in the Masonic Hall. After the formal business was transacted, the members, dressed out in their official regalia, the boys with gold-embroidered sashes over their shoulders, and with flags flying, marched through the village street to the front of



the Manse, with Josey Watt, their celebrated fifer, at their head, playing what he called "the minister's spring"—"If ye kiss my wife I'll tell the minister." Annie Dey stood beside the minister, bottle in hand, and served drams to the men, while her maids served bread and cheese to the boys. Josey, being first in the procession, was first served. His toast was, "Guid health an' lang life tae the minister, an' lang may his lum reek." "Noo, loons," he would say, "we'll gie Annie her favourite, seein' she's wet oor whistle." The procession then marched off, Josey playing "Haud awa' frae me, Donal'." Besides being a musician, Josey was a poet. His compositions were spiced with satire and broad humour that made the objects of his muse feel anything but flattered. Being very short-sighted, he acquired a peculiar habit of walking and lifting his snuff-box close to his eyes every time he took snuff. He had the same habit of peering into the finger-holes of his flute before he began to play. He was as voluble as a French man, and nobody liked to rouse his animosity, knowing that his biting tongue had poison in it.

I am indebted to my friend, Mr. Peter Weir, late of the Mains of Aberlour, for specimens of Josey's style and composition. Mr. Weir could imitate Josey to such perfection that it was impossible to detect any difference between the two. From the following effusion it will be seen that Josey was a true patriot, a sound Protestant, and a great Radical. He evidently lived before his time. In reciting his newly-composed pieces to Mr. Weir, at the end of every verse he made a pause, and delivered some pertinent remarks upon the appropriateness and force of his language, such as, "Ay, ay, Peter, man, there wasna sae mony fine braws fan Eve shewed the fig leaves thegither as there is now-a-days." The following is Josey's effusion :—

"When Adam first delved in his bonnie kailyard,  
 An' Eve tried her han' at the spinnin' o't,  
 They werna oppressed by a factor or laird,  
 Their gear was their ain for the winnin' o't.  
 Nae tax-gaitherer crossed their door threshold ava',  
 Their goods werna 'peined' by the limbs o' the law;  
 Although their first breeks were scrimpit and sma',  
 They had a fellsome beginnin' o't.

"But times took a turn, an' the pair got a fa'—  
 Foul fa' the black thief for the deein' o't,  
 His fause, sleeky tongue maist ruined us a',  
 I wish it had been skaumed in the skinnin' o't,

For fraud and oppression hae ever sin' syne  
Laid their han' heavy on frail Adam's line,  
An' vice aften triumphs ower virtues that shine,  
An' justice, the stream's hardly runnin' o't.

"The poor man labours 'mid trouble an' care  
At plooin' an' delvin' an' winnin' o't,  
Wi' his belly aft pinched, his back aften sair,  
While he toils hard at the winnin' o't;  
His substance is seized on for taxes or rent,  
The priest tak's his tithes an' preaches content;  
Wi' hardship an' labour the puir man is bent,  
An' sorely oppressed wi' the winnin' o't.

"The farmer should live by the fruit o' the soil,  
An' the workman be clad by the spinnin' o't;  
The honey bee suppeth the fruits o' her toil,  
But the drone never toils at the winnin' o't.  
May want, discontent, an' turbulence cease,  
May men live thegither in concord an' peace,  
May Britain aye yield a rich crop an' fleece,  
To keep oor hands full wi' the spinnin' o't."

As true poets are many-sided, Josey has a fling at the Emancipation Bill of 1831:—

"The other day as I did stray  
Where Flora gay dispersed her treasure,  
Each flower in bloom with rich perfume  
My heart rejoiced above all measure;  
And when I strayed beneath a shade,  
Down where the little streamlets meander,  
As I drew nigh I heard a cry—  
'Oh! let us die ere we surrender!'

"I stood and gazed some time, amazed  
To hear so strange a declaration;  
It was no song, I listened long,  
Till I was filled with consternation.  
'Dear Josey, lad, the case is bad,  
It puts me mad with pure vexation  
To think that we content can be,  
Or bear to see Emancipation.

"The news we hear, I greatly fear,  
Will drive us fairly to distraction,  
Since Popish Dan, I understan',  
Again has won the Clare election.  
In his seat he'll not be blate,  
In spite of faith and faith's defender,  
And he intends to put an end  
To Orangemen that won't surrender.

"Forbid that we should ever see  
The Ministry of Great Britannie  
Become the slaves of Popish knaves,  
And bend the knee to Rome's auld granny.

If she breaks loose we'll be crouse,  
 Her auld staff we'll break asunder;  
 Our Limerick tie she will deny,  
 But let us die ere we surrender.

" May the auld deil tak' partial Peel—  
 Why did he yield to Popish Donnell?  
 And Wellington, who laurels won,  
 How fast he's run to join O'Connell.  
 Our Orange flags may gang tae rags,  
 And lie moth-eaten in a corner,  
 But up, my men, in strath and glen,  
 And stand for Britain and her honour."

Like one of the old minstrels, Josey travelled from parish to parish playing on his flute and reciting poems. Altogether he was a remarkable character—a man worth knowing. One dark November morning, he stumbled over a plough in a field on the farm of Drumfurrich, near Craigellachie, and broke his leg. After that event his journeys were shorter. At last the end came. During a great snowstorm he died in the parish of Glenlivet, and was buried in the Bridge of Livet cemetery. I am told that a stone is erected there to his memory by his old friends, the Weirs, a family as remarkable for their benevolence and kindness to the poor as they were for their intelligence and mental gifts. The late esteemed minister of Drainie was one of them. When quite a boy at school, James Weir was distinguished for his mental gifts and amiable disposition. Poor Josey was a welcome visitor at the "Mains." There he found appreciative listeners to his droll stories. Many of them were worth remembering. On one occasion Josey borrowed a horse to go to Elgin. On the road he met a factor, who had been recently made a J.P., who saluted him with, "Josey you're well mounted to-day. You ought, like the wise men of old, to ride an ass." "I canna get ane for love nor money," replied Josey; "they're makin' them a' into factors an' Justices o' the Peace."

When Josey died, one of the best-known Speyside celebrities disappeared from his usual haunts, missed by many who relished his philosophy and biting mother wit.

After the procession of the day, the boys met again in the evening to don their regalia for the ball that took place in the Masonic Hall. Annie Dey gave it her patronage, and led off the dancing with a spirit and grace surprising in such a portly dame.

Few of the younger lasses could so lightly "fit the floor." Jamie Peterkin, one of the most inoffensive and harmless creatures in the parish, never failed to put in an appearance at the procession and the ball. It was truly affecting to see the pleasure that the poor imbecile evinced when the master of ceremonies invested him with a sash. His vacant eyes rolled and his face beamed with pleasure. Poor Jamie was a source of harmless amusement to every loon in the parish. After taking snuff with him, they began—"Noo, Jamie, lat's hear ye spell Rottenslough." Instantly Jamie's eyes began to roll, and his mouth worked as if he was choking. Then he got out "R-o-etn-etn-s-l-o-ech-ech." "Capital, Jamie!" was echoed from a dozen voices at once. "Noo, can ye spell Ecclefechan?" But this was too much for poor Jamie's stuttering tongue. After another pinch of snuff all round, the poor harmless creature went on his way, well pleased with himself, but he was the first member (self elected) to put in an appearance at the next Christmas meeting.

"the bellman." He was a droll body—a bit of a philosopher, with a sort of humour quite his own. Dumpy in figure, his round, cherry-coloured face was set off by a pair of small eyes that twinkled with an expression of sly humour. As he stood, spade in hand, at the bottom of a deep grave, with the striped woollen nightcap on his head, he looked as if he would defy mortality. When he looked up from the grave to answer the many questions put to him by the loons, who never failed to be present when a grave was making, his remarks upon the relics that he had to unearth were always to the point, if not always complimentary.

One boy remarked that a skull that he was taking out of the grave was very large.

"Ay, ay, laddie, it's a muckle skull, but there was never muckle sense in't. I min' weel fan he was beeriet. It was the winter o' the muckle snaw, an' a bonnie job they had tae get 'im ta'en tae the kirkyard. They got on gey weel till they cam' below Ruthrie, faur the dykes waur blawn clean level. They had tae lift the coffin ower the dykes an' come roon by Tombain, an' a heavy lift he was. There was nae bigger man in the parish; but he's little eneuch bookit noo."

I have never been able to account for the repulsive practice, common in my boyish days, of lifting the decaying bones of the dead from the grave when a new interment was made in it. One of the most remarkable sights that I have seen is the so-called "Ripon bonehouse." The vaults below the Cathedral are filled with bones that have been disinterred from the surrounding graveyard. They are piled away pretty much like wine bottles in a cellar.

The bellman was seen at his best on a Sunday morning carrying the books from the Manse to the Church. Black Rod never comported himself with more official dignity. If the two or three red-cloaked old women did not retreat from the pulpit door to let the bellman and "the buikes" have free entrance, he did not hesitate to give them a push off their stools. One of them that generally sat nearest to the pulpit door was considered "nae verra canny," but the bellman feared no enchantment, and often treated her with contempt. He was a man "by ord'nar." Had it been his fortune to have filled a higher official station, he would have brought honour to his native parish.

When the kirk "skailed," the congregation followed him to "The Square" to hear "the cries." When he called out "Notice!" every voice was hushed. What a contrast! The minister's sermon was listened to with little interest, but not a word that Jamie uttered fell upon deaf ears. Some of his commissions were startling utterances, especially when he had to give them by word of mouth. One Sunday he gave "notice" that Nelly Grant, at the head o' the toon, had "killed her twa swine, an' is sellin' them at sarpence a pun' ready money."

At the time Jamie was a tenant of Nellie's. She was a well-known spinster, and possessed a house of her own in the village. Every year she killed two pigs. To say that she fed them would exceed the limits of truth, and the pigs themselves, had they been permitted, would have put on record their veto against such an insinuation. Nettle kail was their daily fare as long as a nettle blade was to be found in the parish, supplemented by the parings of her poorer neighbours' potatoes. When Nelly died, many pounds, all in copper, were found in her house, all accumulated from the sale of her berries to the village bairns. Many of the pennies and bawbees were glued fast together by verdigris. In domestic economy Nelly far surpassed the minister.

Upon another occasion Jamie gave the following cry:—"Notice! Twa yowes an' a blackfaced ram have been either stolen or strayed fae Blair—n. The ram was marked wi' keel at the reet o' the tail an' the yowes upon their hips. Onybody bringin' them tae Blair—n will be weel rewardit."

It was when he had a roup to "cry" that the bellman was heard at his best. The different items were read out in a style and voice that showed that he had in him the making of a minister.

The "cries" were a very interesting institution in my early days.

The Sunday bell that tolled at morn  
Will greet my ears no more ;  
Alas ! no more my friends I'll meet  
Around the old kirk door ;  
In friendly talk no more I'll join,  
Nor ever want to know  
If beasts be selling cheap or dear,  
Or grain priced high or low.

Ye grey-haired fathers of my youth,  
I'll meet you there no more ;

Just like a stream, in years gone by,  
You've reached the boundless shore.  
Yonder around the old kirk walls  
Your final rest you take,  
To earthly change and busy life  
No coming morn will wake.

Next to the old kirk, the most interesting object is the brig that spans the burn close to the churchyard. The idea that it was erected by General Wade cannot be entertained for a moment. There is no doubt that it is coeval with the erection of the church. During the winter months the burn continues more or less in flood for weeks together. When the church was erected the most populous part of the parish was on the north-western side of the burn. When the burn was in spate no one from that side could cross it to church, much less could they cross it with a funeral. The people of Aberlour may rest content that in "the aul' brig" they possess a very interesting relic, and they would do well to see to its preservation.

The rude old font has found a place in the churchyard. There can be no question about its antiquity. Most people in the parish are more or less acquainted with the story of the man who attempted to drown himself in the Spey. Being prevented in his purpose, he was taken to the church and locked into it. When his people came to release him they were horror-stricken to find that he had kept his head in the water that filled the font long enough to drown himself. The old kirk must have had a very rustic appearance when it was "theekit" with heather. Every parishioner was bound to bring yearly a "birn (burden) o' heather" to repair, if need be, the "theck."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE PENNY WEDDING.

"When wild war's deadly blast was blawn  
And gentle peace returning,  
Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,  
And mony a widow mourning."

BURNS.

A WEDDING is always an interesting event in all countries. The manner of conducting the ceremony in England differs widely from the way it is conducted in Scotland. A private marriage is a rare event south of the Tweed, where the parties are joined together in church or chapel, as the case may be.

During the long tenor of Mr. Wilson's ministry in the parish of Aberlour, the marriage ceremony was performed by him in the kitchen of the old Manse. In certain cases, when the couple were of the well-to-do class, he performed the ceremony at the house of the bride's parents.

After the battle of Waterloo was fought and peace proclaimed, no less than three retired soldiers found homes in the village. Although they all had special peculiarities and habits that characterised them, none of them acquired the notoriety that old Francie did. He had served in the "Forty-twa" for over twenty years. After his discharge he came to the village, and lodged with the widow of a comrade who fell at Waterloo.

Meg had been with the regiment. On her return she bought a pony and started in the fish trade. She lived in a cottage at the Foggy Boorach.

Having known Francie in Flanders, and being childless, she was glad to have him as a lodger. He soon acquired a wide notoriety in the parish. He was never seen abroad without "Old Bess," as he called his gun. On pension days he was as much dreaded by every boy and girl as if he had been an African lion let loose. If any of them on their way home from school came



upon Francie lying drunk, with "Bess" by his side, they fled in mortal terror to the nearest refuge they could find. It was supposed that the fearful oaths he uttered upon such occasions were acquired by him in Spain. The remark once made by a Buckie lass to her comrade helps to confirm this impression. On meeting her comrade one morning, she exclaimed—"Oh! lassie, oor Jock cam' hame last nicht fae the sodgers. We hardly kent him, an' he speaks sae gran'. Oh! Betty, ye shud hear him. His language is beautiful if it wasna sae sinfu'."

If my memory serves me right, I don't think that old Francie or the Buckie lassie's brother had any need to leave Banffshire to acquire a fair proficiency in forcible expletives.

It was soon noised about that Meg and Francie were negotiating a matrimonial alliance and were likely to come soon to terms. The farm chieftains in the neighbourhood resolved that when Meg and Francie ratified the contract they would celebrate the event by the revival of a "penny wedding."

As soon as the day was fixed, all arrangements were made. Everyone subscribed so much to a common fund, to be expended in the purchase of meat and drink for the occasion.

Johnny Mackay, the weaver, being a native of Inverness, was considered the best man in the parish to act as master of ceremonies, being a genteel body of good address, with the manners of a real gentleman, and the possessor of a blue swallow-tail coat with brass buttons.

At length the eventful day came, and Johnny duly appeared at the residence of the bride. Before starting for the Manse an awkward parley took place. Francie was determined to carry his gun, and Meg was as determined not to go if he took the gun. In the end Meg had to surrender, and she marched off with Francie, gun and all. Johnny, bottle in hand, headed the cavalcade, with a reserve bottle in each of his coat-tail pockets.

Meg wore a mitch with scarlet ribbons streaming over her shoulders, which were covered by a light-coloured silk shawl brought home from Spain. Francie's uniform was a rough grey suit of home manufacture. The coat had long tails with large pockets, each capable of holding a hare or half-a-dozen moorfowl. His powder horn hung dangling from a belt at his left side. When the bridal party arrived at the kitchen door of the Manse, the

minister's hens fled in terror from the green in front of it, where they were daily fed by the minister and his housekeeper. Long before the poultry mania had broken out, the minister, as she remarked, "was aye lookin' oot for ony new kind o' fools." It was said that the sore upon his nose was caused by the bite of a kestrel hawk that a boy, knowing his love of rare "fools," brought to the Manse for the minister. I cannot vouch for the truth of this statement, but the sore never healed to his dying day. Every Sunday morning the late Dr. Stephen went to the Manse and dressed it, putting on a fresh plaster. It was said that in his haste one morning he cut off a portion of the heading of an *Aberdeen Journal* with the word *Journal* printed on it, and clapped it on the minister's nose. His nose was in proportion to the size of the man, and it was just possible that such a thing happened. I daresay there are persons still living in the parish who can remember the minister and his singular appearance with a patch on his nose.

A short delay took place at the kitchen door. Annie Dye was in the midst of ironing one of the minister's frilled "sarks." On such occasions he always assisted in the operation by taking the heaters from the fire with the tongs and dropping them into the box-iron which Annie held ready to receive them. The invitation was given to "Come in." Francie refused to enter without the gun, but after much persuasion he handed "Bess" to Deacon Grant with the remark, "Haud the mou' o' her doon, Geordy; I wadna like her tae sheet a tailor." "Gang awa' in, Francie, my man," replied the Deacon; "ye'll fin' the fire o' Meg's tongue waur tae stan' than fechtin' at Waterloo."

The kitchen of the old Manse of Aberlour, where the minister performed the marriage ceremony, was in all respects a remarkable place. One storeyed, it joined the Manse at right angles, a large henhouse adjoining it. The barn, cowhouse, and stable were in a parallel row, thus forming an oblong square in front of the Manse.

Daily after breakfast the minister and his housekeeper fed the flock of ducks and hens that congregated there. When Annie and he had taken stock of the laying hens and those likely to lay soon, they retired to the kitchen, followed by a feathered train. The ducks, after flapping their wings in chorus, waddled off to the burn. Before the bridal party could enter, a number of hens had

to be driven out ; but the doos, which roosted on the joists and rafters that crossed the open roof of the kitchen, returned to the top of the box bed that stood at the far end of it. No sooner had the minister commenced the solemn service than they began to make love in their own language, coo-cooing and curring so loud that the minister ceased the service and said, "Annie, woman, tak' the lang beesom an' reesle them doon." But the doos, like the Irish tenants, refused to quit their holdings, and Annie failed to eject them. Francie was heard to remark—"Deil be in them, if I had 'Bess' at their tails I wud seen stop their din." During the parley the minister had time to look about him, and to notice two loons perched on the lid of the meal giral. "Come doon, ye idle rascals, aff there. Ye hae nae bisness here. Be aff wi' ye." Had it been on any other occasion when the minister had his well-known blackthorn rung in his hand, we would have felt its weight. So, crestfallen, we retreated, to be greeted with derision and laughter by our comrades. For this reason, the writer was unable to hear the minister's well-known admonition to the bride.

During the ceremony, Johnny Mackay, with the help of the souter, dispensed drams very freely outside the door. When the bride emerged from it, the gallantry of the master of ceremonies nearly cost him his life. He went forward and attempted to salute the bride. In the twinkling of an eye Francie's great brown hand sent him rolling on the grass, amidst the shouts and laughter of the crowd. He tried to take "Bess" from the Deacon's hand, but Meg intervened and laid her hand on the gun, saying, "Haud awa', ye goukit feel ; we'll hae nae sheetin' here. The puir body has mair sense than you, ye muckle feel ; he kens gweed breedin'." "Haud aff yer han', woman," replied Francie, "or I'll sheet ye baith." Poor Johnny was set on his feet by kind hands and the quarrel was ended. Like Pharaoh's butler, Johnny was restored to his office, and eventually he put the cup into the hand that had so recently cast him down.

When Meg and Francie, walking side by side, emerged from the front of the Manse, in turning the corner of the peat stack they were saluted by a volley of musketry from a number of gunners who had mounted the stack. On the leader calling out "One, two, three !" a volley rent the air. Amidst cheering and clapping of hands, down tumbled the end of the peat stack,

the gunners landing right in front of Meg and Francie. The sternness of old Francie relaxed and he laughed outright, a thing that no one had ever seen him do before. But his countenance quickly changed when Tommy Tethers came limping towards Meg with a hair tether in his hand, exclaiming by way of salutation, "Och, she's ponny, real ponny! There's a tow to tether the horsey. She'll maybe gi'e her ta fish for it some day." Before the poor Highland cripple had time to hand the tow to Meg, Francie's foot sent him a yard or two distant, with the remark, "Lie there, ye fumart-faced Hielan' monkey!" And the cripple towmaker did lie until he was lifted into a wheelbarrow and trundled to his filthy den, amidst the laughter and shouting of the village loons, who had been disappointed at the small amount of "ba' siller" that was thrown amongst them at the wedding. Francie's best man was "Lang Charlie," in whose pouches coin wadna bide, so there was no "fite siller" to scramble for, and consequently no broken heads or bloody noses.

On their way home the bridal party made a halt at the Cottage Inn, to be treated by the sweet and smiling-faced hostess, Widow Cruickshank. Her face still bore traces of her great sorrow for the sad and untimely death of her husband, who was swept away by the great flood of '29 in sight of his house and family. The history and details of his tragic death are recorded in local history.

When the present Manse was built, it was hoped that the beautiful old Cottage Inn would be left standing outside the garden; but that hope was dispelled, and the minister's out-houses now stand upon its site. Its old whitewashed walls were thrown down, and the beautiful honeysuckle bushes that covered them and filled the air with their perfume were uprooted. The writer in his journey through life has seen many prettily-situated Scottish inns and cosy English hostelries, but none of them have left upon his memory so deep and lasting an impression as did the Cottage Inn of Aberlour.

After tasting Widow Chruickshank's hospitality, with her good wishes for the happiness of the newly-wedded couple, they made their way home, escorted by a train of followers, all eager to share the fun. Muckle Nelly was seen standing in the doorway with a sieveful of bread and cheese. As the bride entered, she threw the

contents over her head, exclaiming, "God gi'e ye aye plenty meal an' claith."

The largest pot in the village of Airngarrow was too small for such an occasion. A great copper kettle was borrowed and hung over a fire out of doors, and several old women, like the witches in "Macbeth," kept stirring the bubbling cauldron. The tables were laid in Fiddler Macpherson's barn, where the guests plied their horn spoons to some purpose. Knives and forks were generally absent from the feast. Francie utilised his skeandhu and others their gully knives.

But not until John Hay, the celebrated Strathspey fiddler, rode up to the door on his shelty, with his famous fiddle-case strapped to the saddle behind him, did the fun really begin in earnest. When he took the fiddle from its case and ran his fingers over the strings, all eyes beamed with pleasure and the lads "cleekit" up their partners. Johnny Mackay took up the bride, and kissed her unseen to Francie, then off they went through the maddening maze of a Highland reel. So quickly did the dances follow that John Hay had soon to doff his well-known short-tailed tartan coat, after which operation he gave his memorable fiddler's toast—"May ye never ken a fiddler's drouth." By and bye off came his neckerchief, then the neck button of his shirt was unloosed and the fiddle bow freshly rosined. Then the greatest fiddler in Strathspey was seen at his best. There have been violin players in Strathspey his superior in artistic manipulation of the bow, but the volume of music that he drew from his tiny instrument was truly marvellous. Alas! his bow has lost its cunning and his fingers will finger no more the strings that set the rustic dancers wild with delight. To have heard him play "Tullochgorum" or "The Haughs o' Cromdale" was something to be remembered through life. At the end of the feast the "bedding" was announced, but Francie stood guard at the bedroom door with "Bess" under his arm, and swore that he would shoot the first man or woman that tried to "gang ben the hoose."

On his way home the master of ceremonies saw a scarecrow made up like an old woman. He declared that it was his departed mother, as he affectionately termed her. Nothing would convince him to the contrary until he clasped the scarecrow in

his arms, when the stick that supported it broke, and Johnny and his "departed mother" lay flat between two potato drills, blue coat and all.

Another famous old soldier returned from the wars to his ancestral home beneath the shadow of the Convals. He was discharged without a pension, and he had to take to "the leam" and ply the shuttle. He was in all respects the very opposite of old Francie — cheerful, light-hearted, and voluble, and he could occasionally draw the "long bow" to some purpose. On being told that Jamie More, the bellman, was building a very long stone dyke on Kinermony, he replied to the narrator, "Tach, man, that's nae dyke at a'. Ye sud see the dykes they hae in Spain. I saw ane there seven mile lang, an' it was coppit wi' rams' horns." He affirmed that he understood the language of the crows. In proof of this he said that one morning in April a flock of them from the Knockie lighted on the grass field behind his dwelling, and there held a council. Their leader, a lang-nebbit, grey-headed patriarch, counselled them as follows:—"Dinna gang near the Bush; Bushy's a very deevil at sheetin' wi' his new dooble-barrelled gun. Bogindee has sawn his bere. Hugh never fires a gun; gang ower the burn." We feel certain that the Recording Angel only smiled when he heard poor Charlie's harmless fibs, and never "put them down." I fear that it was otherwise with a certain soldier's widow who took up her abode among us for a short time. Her husband was in the Gordons, and fell at Waterloo. His wife followed him to the field, and found him amongst the killed. Around him lay dozens of dead Frenchmen, and it occurred to her mind that she ought to "spoil the Egyptians," and that blatant, foul-mouthed monster rumour declared that she carried a stocking with a stone in it, and the wounded Frenchmen who objected to be relieved of their belongings had a taste of Mary's stocking. Having heard of Meg's marriage, she came to Aberlour, "wi' plenty o' siller to look for a man." If this was her object, she failed in it. A man or woman may as well escape from their shadow as fly to a place where rumour won't follow them. The moral atmosphere was rarified when "Moggan Mary" departed to her native place, Old Aberdeen.

## CHAPTER XI.

### JOHNNY RUSSELL AND THE BOTTLE O' BARM.

"Three elf-shot were—yet I these ills endured."

AT one time the belief in fairies was so interwoven with the domestic life of a people cradled and nursed in the wild straths and mountain glens of the North, that in some measure it became identified with their everyday life. The child, seated with its elders by the peat fire of a winter's night, heard the oral traditions of the district recited. The feats and deeds of their clansmen stirred within them a spirit of emulation. It is no wonder that a child reared amid such surroundings was deeply imbued with a sense of the unseen and spiritual. The Grants had their spectral guardian which never failed to warn them of death and danger. The name of "Maggie Mulloch" was "familiar as a household word" in my early days, and so was "Botaoh-chaursan," a name that has before now made the writer tremble. "Brownie Clod" does not appear to have had a local habitation. He was a wandering spirit that delighted to travel from place to place, and among poor folks, with his nightly pranks. The writer's grandmother on her annual visit used to relate how a certain man that lived in the Burn of Rothes was so belaboured with clods at his own fireside that he ran out of the house and lay down in one of his carts, intending to spend the night there, but no sooner had he begun to fall asleep amongst "the puckle strae" that he placed in the cart than the shafts were lifted by invisible hands, and the cart was run to the brink of the steep brae, down which it was hurled, landing in the burn below, Johnny and all. Bad and mischievous as "Brownie Clod" was, he was merciful compared to a host of imps that seem to have made the Burn of Rothes a sort of "royal residence." Poor Johnny Russell was so annoyed and tormented by them that his life became a burden to him.

A favourite pastime with these wicked imps was stealing new-born bairns and substituting one of themselves in their place. Where this was accomplished, woe betide the poor family. An "elf-bairn" was not alone a terror to the poor household where it dwelt, but to the whole place. The writer has heard his maternal grandmother tell how she narrowly escaped the fate of "Kilmeny." It was in the memorable '45 that she first saw the light, in a lonely Highland cottage. Her father being "oot wi' the Prince," the mother was left alone with her child, when one night she awoke in time to clutch the feet of my respected grandmother as she was being carried out of bed by the fairies, who fled up the lum with an impish laugh, disappointed of their prey. After that night, when my great-grandmother had an infant by her side she never went to sleep without having a Bible below her head.

Throwing "the putting stane" seems to have been a favourite game with them. When Johnny Russell went up the burn to pen his sheep, they would leave off their game and begin their tricks upon him, by scattering his sheep and teasing his collie until the poor dog howled with fright. Then they would trip the feet from poor Johnny, and set up derisive laughter at the result.

It was drawing near Yule-time, when Johnny's wife, Janet, remarked that she had "better ha'e her drap ale brewed for Christmas, and," said she, "ye'll just stap doon tae Mrs. Stephen's for a hottle o' barm." Johnny, like a good, obedient husband, "raxed doon" his plaid, and, with his trustystick, went down the burn on his errand. The footpath led past the Doonies, the very stronghold of the fairies. Of course they saw Johnny, and Johnny saw them at their frolics, but all they did was to remark, "That's Johnny Russell gaun doon the burn for a bottle o' barm." When he reached the Kirkton, he was glad to hear the kindly voice of Mrs. Stephen accost him—"Come awa' ben, Johnny; I'm gled tae see ye lookin' see weel. Foo are ye a' keepin' up the burn, an' foo's Janet?" Johnny answered this friendly greeting with "Gyely, gyely, thank ye. Foo are ye a' yersel's? I houp Sandy's weel; is he at hame the nicht?" Johnny was glad to hear that they were all "brawly." Before he had time to tell his errand, Sandy Stephen stappit "but" the hoose with a gill stoup in his hand, remarking, "Johnny, A'm richt gled tae see ye, man. I ha'e a drap in this stoup that'll warm yer hairt. Donal' Mac-



pherson, the floater, brocht it doon fae the Braes o' Aibernethy. There was never better fuskies brewed in a bothy." The gill stoup was soon empty. Johnny ordered in another gill, "tae treat Sandy." How often the stoup was filled neither of the cronies could ever tell, but it was "weel on in the nicht" when Johnny rose "tae gang awa'." Mrs. Stephen put the bottle of barm into his "oxter pocket," with the remark, "There, man; that's barm as brisk as a bee. Tell Janet that I'll be stappin' up the burn some day seen tae taste her browst." After leaving the hospitable shelter of Sandy Stephen's house, Johnny rolled his plaid round his shoulders, grasped his trusty stick, and took the road for home. In passing the Manse he saw that the minister and his folks were bedded; the kirkyard looked eerie and dark, and stirred up some strange reflections in Johnny's mind. However, he set off manfully up the burn. The Baron's Craig looked dim and dark against the midnight sky. By the time he reached the Little Doonie, the sweat began to break out on his face, and he felt a strange giddiness in his head and a weakness about his knee joints that made him tumble several times before he reached the Muckle Doonie. Up to this time he had forgotten all about the fairies, but the sight of the rocks hanging over his head and the narrow passage before him brought all the horrors of the situation to his mind, and made him pause before encountering the green-coated gentry at their midnight revelry. He felt himself placed "between the deil and the deep sea." To go back was impossible; go forward he must, and forward he went. He had hardly entered the narrow passage when a shout of derisive laughter was set up by the wicked imps that thronged around. They buzzed about his head like bees as he passed along the lip of "The Devil's Punch-Bowl." Amidst the rush and noise of the water, he heard a report like a pistol fired off close to his ear. At the same moment he was struck under the left jaw by what he believed to be an "elf arrow." On putting his hand to the place, he felt the warm blood running down his breast. He grew faint, and fell upon the rocky footpath. Consciousness left the worn-out body of poor Johnny Russell. There he lay for some time, until his two sons, Jock and Peter, came along the Doonies to seek their father. On raising his head they found he was alive, but in a woeful plight, his clothes saturated with barm.

They took the empty bottle from his pocket and laid him upon his plaid, in which they carried him home. Poor Janet met them at the door with a wail of sorrow. She clasped her arms round her "puir man," calling out, "Oh, Johnny, speak tae me, Johnny! A'm yer ain wife; speak tae me, man, an' say that ye ken yer ain Janet! Ye're surely haverin'; A'm nae the Queen o' the Fairies! Ye're clean dementit, man; ye're in yer ain hoose, an' nae carriet awa' wi' the fairies. Ye've been carriet hame like a bairn by yer ain Jock an' Peter. Dinna ye ken yer ain bed, wi' yer Sunday's claes hingin' on the nail at the fit? Willawins! willawins! that I sud ha'e lived tae see sic a sight as this, an' tae be ta'en by my ain man for the Queen o' the Fairies. Haigh, sirs! Gweed keep us a'! but he's sair gane nae tae ken his ain wife an' bairns."

During this pathetic appeal, poor Johnny raved on in the belief that he was carried off by the fairies to one or other of the subterranean homes of his enemies. "Lat me back," said he, "tae Janet an' the bairns. A'm sair smitten; yer arrows ha'e hit me hard. Hale my wounds an' lat me gang back tae Janet. Fa'll care for them fan A'm awa'?" So powerful was the force of imagination that nothing could ever persuade Johnny that he was hit by the cork of the bottle of barm. He believed that he was "elf-shot," and, as he said, "wud dae nae mair gweed." The writer had the testimony of his venerable, God-fearing granny that Johnny "never got ower the fright," but "dwin't awa'" in "the year o' the short corn." A local rhymester wrote the following lines, but they never were engraved upon the rustic stone that marks the spot where the dust of Johnny Russell rests in peace:—

"Stranger, this stone will let you know  
That Johnny Russell sleeps below;  
He with the fairies got a fright,  
And after that was never right.  
Beside the burn you'll see the spot  
Where John believed he was "elf-shot,"  
Altho' from them he got no harm;  
His death was brought about by barm."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE WATCH-HOUSE AND DUNCAN MACPHERSON'S RAM.

"Here's fine revolution, if we had the trick to see't.  
Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggats with them?  
Mine ache to think on't."

SHAKESPEARE.

THE watch-house is associated in the writer's memory with a host of incidents that left a deep impression of the horrible deeds done by resurrectionists. Few at the present day can remember the agitation caused in Scotland when the dreadful deeds and doings of Burke and Hare were made public. Horror and dread became epidemic, and the whole country was in a fever of agitation at the thought of having the remains of a wife, a mother, or father dragged from their grave and carried off to some dreadful den, there to be hacked and mutilated like a beast. The very thought of such a thing roused the people in many places to desperation. In Aberdeen they demolished the Surgeons' Hall, for they looked upon that detested place as little better than a shambles, where human bodies were bought, like dead beasts, according to their value. The stories told at that time of the deeds done in that human slaughter-house are too horrible to relate. There is little doubt that few of them had any foundation in fact, but they were the means of rousing the deepest feelings of a people who had a great reverence and respect for their dead. They rose up, determined to baulk the resurrectionists of their prey. A watch-house was erected in many graveyards; indeed, very few in the north-eastern counties were without an erection of some kind to shelter the watchers of the dead, and their ruins may be seen in many graveyards at the present day.

A short description of a watch-house well remembered by the writer may interest the reader. The one referred to was built of rough stones, and was about ten feet square. It stood on a spot that overlooked the whole of the graveyard. On either side of the door was a narrow slit or window, that opened and closed with

strong wooden shutters. Through these apertures the watchers could reconnoitre unobserved, and, if need be, fire their guns upon the desecrators of the grave. The fire-place was opposite the door, and over it hung two claymores that had done service at Culloden; upon a small table in the centre of the apartment lay an open Bible, a snuff-mull, pipes, and a bottle of usquebae also stood there to refresh the weary watchers. Had the staunchest teetotaler been there, he would have been sorely tempted to fill the quaich and taste the contents of the bottle. Few at the present time have any idea of the hardships entailed upon the male population of a small parish, in having to watch over the remains of their friends and neighbours for six weeks. That was the prescribed time necessary. The watch-house in some cases was occupied the whole of the winter months, if an epidemic was prevalent in the parish.

The writer had the following incidents in connection with this subject related to him by his venerable grandmother. A certain woman, reputed to be in league with the enemy of mankind, died, and a very curious controversy arose over her body. Some considered her mortal remains as neither more nor less than the empty tenement of an evil spirit. "Are we called upon," said one party in the parish, "to watch over the remains of a woman leagued with Satan?" To confirm this, it was averred that when her spirit fled, strange sounds were heard behind the bed. The controversy was brought abruptly to a close by the death of a much-respected parishioner, about whose body there was no question.

One dark November night, after the death of the respected parishioner referred to, Jamie Gordon and Johnny Dustan "watched the dead." Owing to the darkness of the night, they were obliged to leave the watch-house and survey the ground, lantern in hand. Jamie Gordon undid the bolt, lifted the latch, and was in the act of stepping out, when lo! in a moment he was upset, overturning the table, and the lamp and lantern were both extinguished. Jamie fought manfully with the beast, for they could see by the dim light of the fire that it was a beast of some kind that they were contending with; but all in vain. They were both vanquished, thrown down, and trodden upon by what they believed to be an evil spirit in the shape of a beast, conjured,

no doubt, by the departed witch in revenge for the disrespect shown to her remains by a section of the parishioners. Johnny Dustan, more self-possessed than his companion, called out, "Sain yersel', Jamie; we're in the pooer o' the enemy. God gi'e us a gweed reddance." How they escaped the fury of the beast and came to the village they were never able to tell. When morning dawned, everyone hastened to the kirkyard to see and hear all particulars. Every hole and corner were examined, but no explanation could be found of the strange occurrence, until daft Jock Flemin' called out from a distant corner of the graveyard, "Ye're a' feels thegither; Tibbie's quiet enough in her lair. Here's the beast that beat ye baith." And there, sure enough, lay Duncan Macpherson's ram beneath a gravestone!

The history of that ram, as related to me, would require a volume to itself. The pranks he played and the evil deeds done by him are past recording. Left motherless at his birth, he was adopted into Duncan's family of nine children. He shared their meals, slept under the same roof, and, when he had an opportunity, opened the door of the cupboard and helped himself to any delicacy it contained. But as he grew older he learned even worse habits than these. It was said that Duncan conducted family worship in Gaelic. The strange tongue had an irritating effect on the ram, and he had to be banished to an outhouse while Duncan conducted his service. Eventually he had to be tethered in Duncan's yard, a thing that he resented to his dying day. When he "broke his tether," the news flew from house to house with lightning speed, and fear fell upon every wife and bairn in the place. The memory of Duncan Macpherson's ram was fresh in my early days. It was said some folks tried to get Duncan expelled from the place, he being a "Heilanman" and a stranger. They so far took action in the matter as to "tell the minister." He replied to the deputation by quoting several passages from Scripture. Although poor Duncan was not actually driven hence, he was considered an outcast, and was obliged eventually to return to Lochaber.

In a certain parish not far from Speyside a watch-house had been hastily extemporised in an old roofless tomb belonging to an ancient family that once flourished in the parish. Instead of an arch of stone, the vault had been covered over with great oak

beams, which had become rotten through exposure to the weather and the *debris* from the roof lying upon them. A roof was put upon it and a fireplace built, and the watchers took possession of it, all unconscious of danger. Young men from the village and surrounding farm-houses used to resort to the watch-house and spend the "forenichts" in company with the watchers. Upon one occasion a greater number than usual had met in the tomb. It was said that they spent the evening in a pastime very much out of place amongst the dead. However, about midnight or early morning, the treacherous floor gave way, landing the whole company "down amongst the dead men." In clearing out the *debris*, a pack of cards was found, with more broken glass than goes to the making of one bottle. It was said that next morning one of the watchers horrified the whole place by appearing with his hair grey. It had become grey from fright!

The late Dr. Macpherson of Garbity, father of the late heiress of Aberlour House, had a stiff arm. It was said that it was the result of an encounter with watchers. Another student and he had succeeded in snatching a body from a grave, and had placed it between them in a gig, when they were set upon by the watchers.

The writer has seen more than one coffin placed in what was called "irons," to prevent the possibility of the body being snatched from the grave.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### LUMMIES AND THE MAD SOW.

"The soo and Geordie tried a race,  
Geordie fell an' broke his face;  
'Grumph,' said the soo, 'I've won the race,'  
An' turned her tail to Geordie."

OLD BALLAD.

ONE of the most exciting incidents that happened during my time in the parish occurred on a hot Sunday afternoon in July. "Aul' Lummies," as he was called, having come from the Parish of Lumphanan, took off a feu in the village and built a house upon it. The portion of land allotted to it was named after him "Lummie's Knowe." It was a barren heritage, and it was likely to remain in that condition, for "Lummies" was as "lazy as he was long." His neighbour wives called him "a nesty sklipe." One of them never uttered the contemptuous word but she spat upon the ground. When the minister spoke to him about the insanitary condition of his domicile and its surroundings, he replied—"A nuisance, sir! Fa ever heard sic a name for a muck midden?" On the Sunday afternoon referred to, "Lummies" went to the knowe to flit the cow, and there he lay down and fell asleep. He had not slept long when, to use his own words, "he never got sic a fleg in his life. A great muckle soo ran richt ower me squilein' like a sticket beast. Then I sees aul' 'Boilies,' wi' nae coat on his back nor bonnet on his head, an' a lot o' mair fowk wi' him, runnin' doon the knowe like mad. 'Boilies' cries tae me, 'Foo the d——l didna ye turn back the soo? Run efter her, man.' I set aff an' ran till I could run nae mair. I clappit doon for want o' breath. Eppie Petrie tried tae turn her at the Clayholes, but she fleggit Eppie's coo an' the stirk, an' they ran hame wi' their tails on en' an' the soo ahin' them."

It was at this juncture that the writer and other "idle loons" joined in the chase. At that time the present mansion house of

#### LUMMIES AND THE MAD SOW.

Aberlour was being built and the village was full of ployed in its erection, and as the mad sow ran down the street, old and young rushed out to see the fun and join the race. "The fiery cross" never had such a following. Nelly was there with a pair of "bachels" (old shoes) on her feet. She called out to her neighbour, the Deacon, 'Run, Geordy, man, run; tailors aye rest fan they run.' "Run yersel", Nelly Grant," replied the deacon in his most pompous style; "the soo's mad, Nelly Grant; there's an evil spirit in the beast." The tailor's words seemed to find confirmation, for after at least two hours' chase the sow took to the water and swam through the Spey.

At that time many good and pious people in the parish believed in many things that we in our modern enlightenment and wisdom laugh at. The belief that the enemy of mankind had the power to rule the elements was general. Was it not affirmed in Scripture? Old "Dykie" on a boisterous harvest day tried in vain to fix the top sheaves upon a corn stack that he had built. The crowning sheaves require to stand upright. As soon as he placed a sheaf in this position it was instantly blown from his grasp. At length the old man lost his temper, and took one sheaf after another and threw them to the raging wind. "There, deevil," said he, "tak' them a'." We wonder at the credulity of the refined Greeks and other heathen peoples in their belief in all kinds of gods, good and bad, but it is still stranger to read that such a widespread belief existed in our own enlightened land in the power possessed by the enemy of mankind to manifest himself in various shapes and forms. This may be in some measure accounted for by the prominence given to his name in the sermons preached by ministers, who denounced him and all his works in forcible language.

There was one man in Morayshire whose name is likely to live as long as the Lossie runs to the sea. Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun was not only believed to be in league with Satan, but if tradition is to be credited, he outwitted his master more than once. By way of confirmation, I give the following story as it was told to me:—"The laird had in his service a fine, buxom, rosy-faced quine as dairymaid. She was gey fond o' the lads, an' she put off her milkin' till the gloamin', when the lads were oot o' the yoke an' had time to come in aboot. Ae nicht a strange lad



stappit into the byre an' said, 'This is a fine nicht, lassie. I was passin' the door an' heard ye singin'. I've been tae the merchant's for a bit tobacco. I've come to live at the next toon.' The lassie thocht she had never seen a better like lad atween the stilts o' a ploo, an' verra seen she was ower the lugs in love wi' him. Ae nicht she was on her hunkers milkin' the last coo. As she lookit through the open door her lover cam' in, an' to her horror she noticed he had cloven feet like a coo. But she did the wisest thing that she could hae deen: she telt the laird a' about it. He gave her a lang can'le an' telt her tae hae't burnin' fan the deil cam' tae see her next time. 'If he asks ye, as he is sure tae dae, tae gang wi' him at ance accordin' tae yer promise, just say I will fan that can'le burns tae an' en'. The next nicht the lass did as she was telt. 'Agreed,' said the deil. The lass quickly pull't the can'le oot o' the socket an' lichtet it at the ither en'. She had nae seener deen this than the deil flew oot at the door like a fire-flaught."

"To cheat the deil" and "Deil tak' the hindmost" were expressions at one time constantly used by Scotch folks in their everyday conversation. Very few of them had any idea how they originated. When the Laird of Gordonstoun was receiving his education in the black arts in the academy that Satan had established in Italy, the only fee the latter demanded was that the last scholar that came out at the door when the school was broken up at the end of the term was to be his. It so happened that the Laird of Gordonstoun was the last to pass out at the door, and his master was waiting to lay hold of him. Sir Robert said to Satan, "Take the man behind me." Satan made a grab, but it was at the laird's shadow on the wall, and he found that his pupil had learned his lesson when he was able to "cheat the deil." After that event he was known as the "Shadowless Laird."

It is remarkable how frequently allusion is made to Satan in old Scottish ballads. There is not perhaps in all the wide range of them one to compare in this respect to "Cumberland and Murray's descent into Hell." The pen that wrote it must have been dipped in brimstone instead of ink. One verse will be enough to satisfy the reader. The ballad consists of ten six-line verses:—

"Ae deevil sat splittin' brimstane matches,  
Ane roastin' the Whigs like baker's batches,  
Ane wi' fat a Whig was bastin',  
Spent wi' frequent prayer and fastin';  
A' ceased when thae twin butchers roar'd,  
And hell's grim hangman stopt an' glower'd."

The ballad refers to Cumberland and Secretary Murray, the latter of whom turned King's evidence in the trial of his comrades after 1745, and earned for himself the bitterest hatred of all Jacobites.

A venerable and respected mother of a large family solemnly declared to the writer that a certain young "cutty" had bewitched her son Willie. "Oh, the limmer!" said she, "he's nae the only ane that she's played her cantrips on. There was puir Jock M'Farlane; she had him clean oot o' his min'. She gave him a drink, an' she did the same tae Willie, an' he's gaun aboot like ane dementit. The abominable hussy, she deserves tae be brunt in a tar barrel." The "cutty" referred to was no witch, but nevertheless she was very bewitching, and certainly the way that poor Willie followed her went to prove his mother's words that he was "dementit."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE WATER KELPIE AND WILL O' THE WISP.

"The water kelpies haunt the ford  
By your direction,  
An' 'nighted travellers are allured  
To their destruction;  
An' aft your moss traversin' spunkies  
Decoy the wight that late and drunk is;  
The blazin', curst, mischievous monkeyes  
Delude his eyes,  
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,  
Ne'er mair to rise."

BURNS.

**B**EFORE the military roads were constructed in the Highlands and bridges built over the fords, many belated travellers lost their lives in crossing the swollen streams and rapid running rivers. Nearly every ford along their course was believed to be haunted by water kelpies, a sort of evil spirits that could transform themselves into various shapes and forms. One of their devices was to take the form of a pony with saddle and bridle, ready to carry any weary traveller through the fords. The "Mill Ford," which takes its name from the ancient mill of Easter Elchies, was considered the least dangerous on "the run o' Spey." It was in the summer season often so shallow that foot travellers crossed easily. Being the highway from Elgin and the "Laich o' Moray" to lower Strathspey, it was much used by people who could not afford to ride through it, but "cast their sheen and waded."

A shoemaker and his wife went from Inveraven to Elgin on business, the souter to buy leather, which he and his wife were to carry home on their backs. Footsore and weary, they reached the Mill Ford about midnight. The miller being in bed, they laid their burdens on the bank and sat down to rest and refresh themselves before "takin' the foord." They only sat for a short time when the husband remarked, "There's the miller's shely on the green, wi' the saidle an' bridle on't. There wad be nae hairm

o' ridin' it through the water. We can turn it back at the ither side. I'll tak' the leather on in front an' ye can loup on ahin' me." As soon as the wife mounted, the beast took the water with a rush. In spite of the souter's efforts, it turned its head down the stream. They tried to dismount, but all in vain. They felt as if they were glued to the back of the fiendish beast, which to their horror opened its mouth and said, "Sit weel, Jannity, an' ride weel, Davie; the first landin' ye'll get will be in the Pool o' Cravie." "Lord preser' us a'!" exclaimed the poor wife. The words were hardly uttered before they felt themselves struggling in the water, and saw nothing but the bundle of leather floating down the Spey.

Davie Stuart, being a pious man, had bought a Bible in Elgin. His wife had wrapped it up carefully with a silk handkerchief and mutch ribbon that she had purchased. They were tied in a bundle on her back. The Bible was the providential means of saving them from a watery grave. It is said that neither book nor ribbon were wet although plunged in the river.

The people of Aberlour being characteristically cautious, we never heard that any of them were entrapped by

"The blazin', curst, mischievous monkeys."

There was a singular deposit of club moss that lay between Tamnabent and the bottom of the Benrinnes hills. It lay in some places to a depth of ten feet. It had evidently been swept down from the hills by a flood or a glacier, as it was mixed with fir trees, many of them with their roots uppermost. Where the peat had been cleared away, the boles and roots of trees were seen in the ground where they had grown before the avalanche of moss had overwhelmed them. On this "Boorach," as it was called, "Will o' the Wisp" hung out his nightly lamp to allure or terrify the belated traveller.

Close to the edge of the moss stood a cluster of primitive cottages. In one of them dwelt "Old Francie" and Meg, his wife, whose marriage is related in a preceding chapter, and the following story was often told by Francie:—

"Ae nicht Meg an' me had jist lyen doon, fan we hears a boo-booin' comin', as it were, doon the lum. 'God preser' us a'!' said Meg, 'fat's that? The Lord hae a care o' us, Francie, fat can it be?' 'Be,' says I, 'fat can it be, ye gowk, but the win' in the

lumhead.' 'Get up, man,' says she, 'I ken the howlin' o' the win' ower weel. It's some puir cratur laired in the moss.' Tae get quit o' her din, I jist rises an' draws on my breeks an' gangs tae the door, an' faith, she was richt, for gey weel doon in "The Boorach" I hears something booin' like a bull. I gangs awa' in an' staps my feet in my sheen, an' tak's doon the gun aff the kebars. 'Fat is't, Francie?' says Meg. 'The Lord preser' us, far are ye gaun wi' the gun?' 'Lie still in yer bed,' says I, 'I'm thinkin' there's a stray buck fae Glenfiddich laired in the moss I'll stap doon an' try an' get a shot at him.' Sae awa' doon I gangs. I could see naething, the nicht was sae dark, but I hears a boo, boo, booin' again. Sae I gangs on till I thocht I was near the place far the soun' cam' fae. At last I cries oot 'Is onybody there?' 'I'm the Bull o' B——m,' said a weel-kent voice. 'Ye doitit, stupit feel,' says I, 'fat are ye deein' there ower the head in a moss hole?' Wi' that I gangs richt up tae him an' poo's him oot, an' a bonnie job I had. Ye ken he was aye a great, muckle, fushionless cheil, an' he was waur fan he was fou. He had been at B——hy's roup, an' he saw a licht in "The Boorach," an' thocht it was fae his ain window."

The hero of this adventure never failed to attend all the roups that took place round about, and of course he never failed to get "roarin' fou" at them. Francie was not by any means the only one who had upon such occasions rescued "The Bull o' B——m" from a perilous situation, and they were not likely to soon forget their encounter with him.

Besides fairies and kelpies, other supernatural manifestations were by no means uncommon in our parish. A well-known veracious man solemnly declared that one night he had his supper along with his fellow servants, but being more of a serious turn of mind, he left them at their diversions in the kitchen and went off to bed. His bedroom lay at the further end of a wide farmyard. In crossing it, to use his own words, "My hair stood on en' an' my knees knockit thegither at the sicht that I saw. The yaird was fou' o' a' kin's o' dogcairts and coaches. A hearse was stan'in' at the front door o' the hoose. Hoo I got through them tae my bed that nicht the Lord kens; I canna tell. It wasna verra lang after fan the mistress dee'd, an' the yaird was filled wi' carriages an' a hearse exactly as I saw it that nicht I gaed early tae bed."

At the time that this vision appeared a belief in "the evil e'e" had not entirely died out on Speyside. The possessors of this malignant influence seem to have directed it principally against innocent and harmless children. If a child was more than ordinarily prococious or beautiful in was in danger of "the evil e'e." Alexander M'Lagan, the author of that wonderfully graphic poem, "The Evil E'e," writes—

"An evil e'e hath looked on thee,  
My puir wee thing, at last;  
The licht has left thy glance o' glee,  
Thy frame is fading fast.  
Wha's freens, wha's foes in this cauld world  
It's e'en richt ill to learn;  
But an evil e'e hath looked on thee,  
My bonnie, bonnie bairn."

Many mothers of "bonnie, bonnie bairns" lived in perpetual fear of an evil e'e blighting and shortening the child's life. They would shake their heads and say, "I fear that bairn's nae lang for this warl'." It does appear strange that in many cases the prediction came true. "Whom the gods love, die young," said the ancients, and we practically admit the truth of the saying, for we often say that certain individuals are "too good to live long."

We know how hardly superstition dies out amongst a highly imaginative people, but it is still more strange that they should have believed that they could counteract the evil purposes devised against them by drinking water off a crooked sixpence. A very astute and worthy Speyside matron never allowed her two fair, buxom daughters to go to a dance or merry-making without "tastin' aff a saxpence." On one occasion the lover of one of them, while waiting to take her to a dance, took up the glass of water intended for her. In hurriedly drinking it he was nearly choked by the sixpence. In his excitement he threw it in the fire, thereby incurring the wrath and indignation of the worthy dame for the loss of her "lucky saxpence." The same worthy wife had a cow "bewitched." Her milk was turned to water, and the proper antidote against this sort of spell was at once gone through. A quantity of the liquid drawn from the cow was put into a pot and hung upon the fire. When the contents began to boil a long-bladed knife was drawn through it in the form of a St. Andrew's cross. This operation was repeated until the sun set, when the pot was lifted off the fire and carried to the middle of

the field where the cow grazed, and was poured into a hole made beside a "yirdfast stane." By this means the cow was cured and the spell broken. It seems incredible that such an operation as this was actually gone through on Speyside less than sixty years ago. Even at a later date a cow belonging to a worthy villager of Aberlour "lost her milk." After many fruitless attempts had been made to restore it, several neighbours declared that "the coo was witched," and one of them volunteered to cure her. At sunrise he went with a pail to the burn and filled it with water from beneath the bridge, gathering at the same time a number of water-worn pebbles from the bed of the burn. He put the pebbles into the water and carried it home. After being boiled, he took out the stones and gave the cow a drink of the water. What was left of it he poured on her back. "The water," said he, "for this purpose has tae be ta'en fae a stream at the spot far the livin' an' the dead cross. It will cure ony coo bewitched."

There were many supernatural manifestations believed in that there was no divination against. When "the death watch" or "chackymill" was heard in the old wooden box-bed, mantle-shelf, or chest of drawers, no one, young or old, doubted "the warning." that a death was impending.

Of all the birds of ill omen, the magpie, or "pyet," was most to be dreaded as the bringer of evil tidings. If one alighted near a dwelling and gave utterance to its peculiar crackling notes, news of the death of a relative would soon be received; if two of them crossed the road in front of a traveller, ill luck would attend his errand. No doubt but that the habits of this gamekeeper persecuted bird in some measure account for the idea that it possessed a foresight of domestic calamities.

There were few farm houses that had not an ash or rowan tree growing in or near the yard (garden). In one or other of the trees a pyet had its nest. In an old ash tree that grew near the old house of Kinermony a pair of pyets had a nest for generations. Every year the birds returned and occupied the nest. After hatching and rearing their young, the two old birds and their brood disappeared in a mysterious way, but a pair never failed to return the following year exactly at the same time. The magpie, unlike the gregarious rook, is a solitary and hermit-living bird rarely seen and avoiding notice.

When the cock, the very counterpart of the pyet, crowed boldly at the midnight hour, the awakened household, in a state of fright and consternation, wondered who would be the victim of this mysterious announcement. We can hardly at the present time believe that the greater number of our forebears believed that birds, and even beasts, were made the medium of announcing to them the irrevocable voice of fate.



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE LAST OF THE GORDON LAIRDS OF ABERLOUR.

"A Norlan' laird neist trotted up,  
Wi' bawan't naig an' siller whup,  
Cried, 'There's my beast, lad, haud the grip,  
Or tie't till a tree."

Sir A. BOSWELL.

THE history of the numerous lairdships that existed on Speyside during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would make very interesting reading at the present time. The number of lairds that bore the name of Grant is remarkable. J. W. H. Grant, Esq. of Wester Elchies, is the sole proprietor of what at one time constituted five separate lairdships, viz., Elchies, Knockando, Ballintomb, Allachie, and Carron. The last named place was bought by John Roy Grant, a son of the Laird of Freuchie, from the Marquis of Huntly. His name will always be remembered on Speyside for the deed he committed in killing his kinsman, John Grant of Ballindalloch, in a dispute they had about the boundaries of their respective properties. From this cause a lasting feud existed between the families for generations. The deed was committed in 1566. Patrick, his eldest son, succeeded his father in Carron, his brother Robert became laird of the Nether Glen of Rothes, and the third son became famous as James au Tuim, or James of the Hill. The Laird of Elchies seems to have had what was called "the power of pot and gallows," a power that was usually the prerogative of a feudal lord. I well remember seeing in the bed of the Spey opposite the boat-house a large, flat-topped boulder stone called "The Trial Stane." When the Laird of Elchies sat in judgment upon a witch, he ordered her to be placed on "The Trial Stane." If she succeeded in reaching the bank of the river she escaped "scot

free." "The Stane" was very dangerous to the boat in crossing, so the late William Thomson had it and other large stones blown up into fragments at a time when the river was very low.

In these democratic days people would hardly believe in the deference paid to "The Laird." In many respects it amounted almost to servility. Their retainers and servants were ready to serve them even at the cost of their lives. One of the lairds of Glenmoriston had a quarrel with a tenant on his estate. It was beneath the dignity of the laird to kill a man in his position, but his faithful henchman, Donald Grant, waylaid the man that offended the laird, and gave him "the dirk." He was tried for the murder at the assize held in Inverness. Of course he was acquitted, and served the laird for years after. When he died the laird followed him to the grave. As he looked down on the coffin he exclaimed, "Aye, aye, Donal', ye're lyin' there in yer last graith. Ye were aye a true an' faithfu' servant. I could hae trusted ye wi' untold gowd, but I could never trust ye wi' unmeasured fusky."

The small estate of Aberlour had been in the possession of a Gordon for many generations. The Gordons were faithful followers of Prince Charlie. When the last laird of the name died, a note written by the Prince was found hidden away in a recess. It ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR GORDON,  
"I am to be at —, and I trust to see you there  
with as many men as you can raise to rally round the Royal Standard.

"I am, yours faithfully,

"CHAS. E. STUART."

The note is dated from Dalnacardoch in August, 1745, and addressed to James Gordon, Esq. He was very likely the grandfather of the last laird of that name, who, in the hope of filling his exhausted exchequer, established a distillery close to the mansion house. Being totally devoid of any business qualifications, he involved himself in financial ruin. His creditors took possession of his property, and let the distillery to the late John Grant, who carried it on successfully until the property was sold to the late Alexander Grant. On removing from Aberlour, Mr. Grant established the far-famed Glengrant Distillery at Rothes. Few men on Speyside were better known and more highly respected than was "Glenny," as he was familiarly termed.

When the news spread through the parish that Sandy Grant, the lad that had left it almost penniless many years before, had returned to his sister's house at Garbity almost a millionaire, and that he had bought the estate of Aberlour, and intended to transform it and build a mansion surpassing any castle in the North, it was only a pardonable pride that we all felt in the rich man who had returned to beautify and bless his native parish by the means of his wealth. We can imagine what his feelings were when he put his foot on the estate that he had spent his life to possess. What golden dreams he must have cherished beneath the burning sun of India! Along with the estate of Aberlour he hoped to acquire the farm of Drumfurrich on which he was born. When he made his first appearance in the village his movements were eagerly watched by all eyes, and speculation was rife whether he would remember old Mrs. Cumming and call upon her. She was a fellow-servant with him when he left Elchies for the East. Along with the other servants, she gave him half-a-crown and her blessing when he left. It was amusing to see the number of people who tried to put themselves in his way, but they failed to draw the attention of the rich man. He had no eyes for them; he seemed wholly absorbed in his plans for the future. It is sad to think that he did not live to realise his aspirations. Before the residence that he was building was completed, Death laid his icy hand on the rich laird, and all his plans for the future were paralysed. Fortunately he had arranged before his death to have the body of the Parish Church lengthened and the tower or steeple that gives it such prominence in the village built. It was his intention to replace the wretched "rickle" of a stone dyke that surrounded the graveyard by a new stone wall.

His splendid mansion, with the estate and all his wealth, passed to the only daughter of Dr. Macpherson of Garbity, his niece on the mother's side. She took the name of Grant, and from that time she became identified with the Parish of Aberlour and the history of Speyside. When she attained her majority she came to live in the new mansion. Ninety local gentlemen met there to celebrate the event. The events that followed are so well known in the parish that there is no need to put them on record. They were what may be truly termed "a life drama."

On her death the estate passed to a distant relative. The untimely death of the heiress of Aberlour was felt by everyone in the parish. With no experience of the world and wealth at her command, we can hardly wonder that one in her position was more to be pitied than envied, and it is to be regretted that the wealth acquired by her uncle during the many years of his exile failed to accomplish the objects he had no doubt in view. Her successors were too poor to occupy the mansion house, and for a time the beautiful residence seemed doomed to desolation.

Fortunately, the late Mr. Findlay, proprietor of *The Scotsman*, purchased the estate. The day that he took possession of it and became Laird of Aberlour ought to be marked as a red-letter day in the history of the parish for very many years. When Mr. Findlay became proprietor, he not only brought with him material means, but he had the desire to use it for the improvement of his newly-acquired property and for the benefit of his tenants. He felt, to use his own words, "that a laird or landed proprietor has peculiar responsibilities to fulfil, more especially in reference to his cottar tenants." This responsibility he felt to be widened after he acquired, from the Duke of Fife, some of the finest land and the largest farms in the parish. No landlord ever tried more conscientiously to do his duty and better the condition of the cottars upon his property. He was able and disposed to lay out upon it a great amount of money from which he never expected any return. Those who can remember the conditions of cottar life around the base of Benrinnes and the Conval Hills sixty years ago and see their altered condition at the present day, are able to calculate the benefit that the late Mr. Findlay has conferred upon them. I consider it a fortunate incident in my life to have met him as the Laird of Aberlour. I have met few men who have left upon my mind a more pleasing impression. Free from ostentation, he dispensed his hospitality with a kindly warmth that made the recipient of it quite at home. No one could have been long in his company before discovering that he was a man of high Christian principles, and that his everyday life was regulated by a sense of his responsibilities. His aim was to do "good unto all men," and his beneficence was not confined to Aberlour alone.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE HOWDY AND THE BONE DOCTOR.

"The hireman wi' the dookit mare is awa' to seek the howdy."

OLD SONG.

THE howdy was not only a person of importance, but she was a benefactor to the parish in which she dwelt. During the first decades of the last century there were many parishes in the North that had no doctor within their boundaries. In such parishes the howdy was indispensable. She was really the most important person in it, and she was generally a woman that carried herself with becoming dignity. In our parish we had one whose fame made her much sought after in other places. She was in all respects a superior woman, and could tell the number of bairns that she brought into the world, and more or less of their life history. She used to tell with great glee how Nelly Fleming, a famous howdy, served poor Jock M'Alister when his wife was first confined. He would not be kept off "the door-stane." Every few minutes he came asking "Foo's Kirsty noo, mistress?" The howdy noticed a gizened barrel standing at "the cheek o' the door." "Jock," said she, "tak' the water stoups an' fill that bowie tae the brim wi' spring water. There winna be ony betterness for Kirsty till ye fill that bowie tae the brim." Poor Jock set to work with a hopeful heart, and carried and poured load after load into the barrel, but all in vain; he could not accomplish his task. When wellnigh exhausted, he heard the welcome voice of the howdy calling to him, "Gi'e ower, Jock, an' come in; Kirsty wants tae see ye." Soon after this event, Jock heard that the wife of his crony, Peter Mitchell, was about to be confined, and he exclaimed, "L—d help Peter, puir man, if he has tae carry the water."

When "the hireman wi' the dookit mare" came clattering down the village street, every wife ran out to hear the news about "the wife that wantit the howdy."

The late William M'Connachie, of the Haugh of Elchies,

ministered to 'humanity in a different way to the howdy. His name was known from the Ness to the Dee as a wonderful bone-setter, and people came to him from far and near to have their broken bones set and their sprained limbs adjusted. The gift of bone-setting seems to have been hereditary in that branch of the M'Connachie family. Even the women were skilful bone-setters, but "Haughy's" reputation surpassed all the rest of the family. He was not only able to relieve their pains, but he cheered their spirits by his kind sympathy while he was of necessity giving them pain. Big in stature, his round, kindly face beamed with benevolence. He was truly a benefactor to his kind, and his name deserves to be held in remembrance on Speyside. The gatherings that nightly met around "Haughy's" hospitable fireside ought to have been portrayed by Wilkie. While one of the company read the *Aberdeen Journal*, the rest listened with eagerness and attention visible on every face. The paper that gave an account of the coronation of our late beloved Queen drew tears from the eyes of the old man. He said, "Oh, lads, it wad be a gran' sicht tae see her seated on the aul' stane wi' the croon on her head. God grant that she may ha'e the wisdom o' Solomon, an' be like his father David, victorious ower her enemies. It's a bonny name Victoria for a Queen." Old "Haughy" was a man full of kindness and good intentions. When he lifted his potato crop, he never failed to send a bag of his "mealy peters" to every cottar around the place. His benevolence knew no bounds.

## AUL' "HAUGHY'S" DEAD.

Aul' "Haughy's" dead and gone at last,  
 Killed by fell winter's biting blast ;  
 Oh ! cruel Death, you might have passed  
     The old man's door ;  
 Not tied his supple fingers fast,  
     To move no more.

When we did our legs or arms sprain,  
 He was the man to ease our pain ;  
 We'll wish for "Haughy," but in vain ;  
     No more we'll view  
 His kindly, honest face again,  
     Of rosy hue.

When on the ice we made a slip,  
 Or idle schoolboys made us trip,  
 Disjointing ankle, leg, or hip,  
     And could not stand,  
 All that we needed was a grip  
     Of "Haughy's" hand.

Laid on their backs in cart or car,  
 Lame folks came from near and far,  
 Their limbs tied to a lath or spar  
     To keep them steady,  
 Till they were laid by "Haughy's" hearth,  
     Where he was ready.

When idle weans and bairnies fell,  
 And broke their bones ower dyke or rail,  
 With bandages and wooden spale  
     He set them right;  
 Their joyful mothers, thankful, tell,  
     And show the sight.

Now that old "Haughy's" dead and gone,  
 With joints wrenched out or broken bone,  
 On bed or sofa we may moan,  
     He cannot aid;  
 His magic hands are cold as stone,  
     And helpless laid.

His kindly words and cheerful mood,  
 His honest heart, so true and good,  
 Dispelled the clouds that often brood  
     When pains distress;  
 With purse and hand he ready stood  
     To make them less.

"The Drummer" was another public benefactor. He was indispensable at one time in most northern parishes. He was a functionary that had a most important duty to perform, namely, to perambulate the village street twice a day and beat the drum—in the morning at six o'clock to waken the lieges to their daily toil, and again at nine o'clock at night to warn them off to bed. We cannot at the present day form any estimate of the service "The Drummer" rendered at a time when clocks and watches were few and far between in a country parish. The following couplet gives a true representation of many a hamlet and village in the North:—

"In the aul' toon o' Duffus there is neither watch nor clock,  
 But parritch time an' sowens time, an' aye yoke, yoke."

The dwellers in many a Highland strath and glen had no other indication of the flight of time than the shadow of some prominent rock on a mountain or hill top. "The dial-stone, aged and green," stood in the farmer's kailyard, but it was only of use when the sun shone. The sandglass was a thing almost unknown in the North of Scotland. In many houses the long monotonous winter nights were measured by the quantity of yarn done by the spinning wheel.

"The Drummer" had at one time a very disagreeable function to perform. He was called upon to "drum" any disreputable character beyond the parish boundary. There was an attempt made upon one occasion to revive this obsolete practice in our parish. A disreputable "Heilanman" came to reside in it, and his treatment of his wife had raised the ire of every wife in the place, and they egged on the young lads and boys to make him "ride the stang." "The Drummer" flatly refused to beat the drum in the rear of the procession, so the loons went to work without him. A long boat-stang was procured, and with it the party proceeded to Duncan's door and knocked. It was opened by Duncan's wife, who asked "Fat dae ye want?" "We want tae speak tae yer man for a meenit ootside the door," they replied. "The teil o' ootside the door will Tuncan gang the nicht." The leader of the force pushed the door open and entered the passage. In a moment the wife shut the door and barred it. Duncan and his wife fell upon the intruder and belaboured him to their hearts' content. The wife laid on to him with the tongs, and Duncan threatened to take his life with an old skeandhu. The result was that Duncan left the place.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE KAILYARD.

“There is naething in the Hielan’s  
But lang kail and leeks,  
An’ lang-legged laddies  
Gaun wanting their breeks.”

OLD LOWLAND RHYME.

THE fame of “the kail-suppers of Fife” was not confined to their native county; their abilities in kail consumption are acknowledged to far surpass that of any county in Scotland. We are now familiar with what the critics call kailyard literature. The books referred to describe the humble, every-day life of Scottish folks in general, and the critics who have given them this designation are perhaps unaware how much the “kailyard” at one time ministered to the daily diet of Scottish families. Before the introduction of the potato and the turnip, kail and leeks were almost the only potable vegetables they possessed. In some form or other kail was a daily dish. It is remarkable how often they are alluded to in the old ballads and songs of the country. In an old song at one time very familiar to north country folks reference is made to two ways of cooking kail—

“There is caul’ kale in Aberdeen  
And castocks in Stra’bogie;  
Every lad maun hae his lass,  
An’ I maun hae my cogie.”

The cogie was a wooden dish into which the kail was poured. After being chopped fine and mixed with the “bree” in which they had been boiled, a little oatmeal added made “caul’ kale” a very relishable dish. “And castocks in Stra’bogie.” Very few are perhaps aware that the stems of kail contain a pith resembling the marrow in a beef bone. In his “Hallowe’en” Burns says—

“Then first and foremost thro’ the kail  
The stocks maun a’ be sought ance;  
They steek their e’en and graip and wale  
For muckle anes and straight anes;

An' gif the castock's sweet or sour,  
 Wi' jocktelegs they taste them;  
 Syne cozily aboon the door  
 Wi' canny care they place them  
 To lie that nicht.

The marrow in the castock tastes sweet and sugary, and no doubt the folks of Strathbogie had a more refined taste than the Aberdonians, and knew more of culinary science. In another popular old song we get a lesson in kail cookery. By way of explanation, it was the custom when the family gathered round the fireside on a winter's night that the kail pot was hung on "the crook." It was the special duty of one of the women folk to watch the pot and to keep "the kail doon in't" with a long wooden "spurtle." The rest of the women folk employed their time in spinning or knitting, while the guidman and the lads drew out their gully knives and made halters and crooks from fir and hazel tree roots to spin raips for the corn stacks. On such occasions it was customary for neighbour lads to drop in to spend the night "an' crack wi' the lasses." It must have been upon such an occasion that the lass neglected her duties and allowed the kail to rise above the rim of the pot and get "reekit." Her delinquency is set forth in the wailing words of the song—

"Oor kail's reekit an' oor kail's raw,  
 I wat it's nae fairly,  
 For a' the hale lang winter's nicht  
 She clappit the cheek o' her Charlie."

It was very likely upon a similar occasion that a farmer's son played off a nasty trick upon an unsuspecting maiden, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer. He was her accepted lover, and he paid, along with a companion, a weekly visit to the farm. They never failed to find the daughters busy at the wheel. The mother in the pride of her heart was wont to show them the fine linen that her daughters had spun. But it was whispered to the lover that his sweetheart never turned the wheel between the times of his visits. The device that he fell upon to test the truth of the story deserves to be recorded. In passing through the farmyard he took the key from the barn door and kept it in his pocket until the maiden "spun aff her rocks." When she began to roll new lint on her distaff, he gallantly took it from her hand and rolled it for her. In the midst of it he placed the barn door key. Supper being ready, the wheels were laid aside

for that night. On their next visit the young men had hardly seated themselves by the fireside when the farmer greeted them with, "Dod, lads, hae ye seen onything o' oor barn door key? It disappeared the nicht ye was last here, an' we thoct in passin' the door ye had drawn it oot an' hidden't for a trick." "Weel, Mains, I did hide the key, but in a place far I thoct ye wud hae fun't lang afore this time," replied the young farmer. Very soon his sweetheart's "rock" began to shrink, and from it down rattled the barn door key. The young farmer lifted it from the floor and handed it to the farmer with the remark, "That's yer barn door key, Mains, it's deen gweed service for me; it has opened my e'en. Gweed nicht." The young farmer did not stop for his kail that night.

We turn from this untoward incident in lovemaking to the happy couple that have left a record of their meeting "at Carlisle Ha'"—

"There grows a bonnie brier bush in oor kailyard,  
And sweet are the blossoms on't in oor kailyard;  
And 'neath that bonnie brier bush a bonnie lad and lass  
Are busy, busy coortin' in oor kailyard."

We know that in many kailyards in Scotland lovers meet beneath the honeysuckle bower and the bourtree bush to tell the old, old story. And it is pleasing to note that when the escort went to Germany "to bring hame the wee, wee German Lairdie," they found him "plantin' kail and dibblin' leeks in his wee, wee German yardie," no doubt in anticipation of his coming to rule the land of "lang kail and leeks."

There is perhaps no more useful or ornamental plant grown in our gardens than the curled greens. It is hardly possible to over-estimate its value at one time to the inhabitants of Scotland. They cooked it in various ways, and had it not been for its extensive use amongst cottar folk scurvy and skin disease would have been far worse than they were. If cottars possessed a good kailyard they were never at a losses for a family meal. There was at one time a man in the parish of Aberlour who had such an inheritance. He was known far and wide as "The Laird of Kailtack." His house lay between the house of Kinermory and the Spey. All trace of it and the famous kailyard has been swept away by the ruthless hand of Time; but happily the name

and the tragical end of the old laird and his famous capacity as a kail-supper is preserved to us in the traditions of the parish:—

“The Laird o’ Kailtack  
Had kail in galore ;  
The diel siccan kail  
Was e’er seen before.  
As big as an apron  
The blades could be seen,  
O’ a’ kind o’ colours  
Frae purple tae green.

“The laird aye rose early,  
Before it was licht ;  
On one winter’s morning  
He saw a sad sight—  
The yard door was open,  
He heard the pigs grunt ;  
They had stripped every kail blade  
Close to the runt.

“The laird got a stick,  
Then he closed the yard door ;  
He frothed at the mouth,  
He cursed and he swore  
That every pig o’ them  
For that night’s work  
He wud hang by the heels  
And eat them as pork.

“The laird in his wrath  
Flew at the auld soo,  
But she fought like a tiger,  
If history speaks true ;  
Her pigs in their terror  
Ran squealin’ aboot  
Until the laird’s wife  
In her nichtmutch cam’ oot.

“She rushed to the kailyard,  
Not a moment too soon :  
The soo was the victor,  
The auld laird was doon ;  
Wi’ her great muckle tusks  
She clung like a cleg,  
An’ held the auld laird  
By the calf o’ the leg.

“To lift up the laird  
Was nae easy task,  
Wi’ suppin’ o’ kail  
He was round as a cask.  
When carried indoors  
And laid on his bed,  
‘I’ll get nae mair kail porridge’  
Were the last words he said.

“ If the legend’s correct  
And history speaks true,  
It was believed that the diel  
Was in the auld soo :  
When the laird breathed his last  
She fled from the door  
To the hill o’ Benrinnes,  
And was never seen more.”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### UNDER THE DOMINIE'S JURISDICTION—THE PARISH “DOLES.”

“There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,  
The village master taught his little school ;  
A man severe he was, and stern to view—  
I knew him well, and every truant knew.”

NEXT to the auld hoose at hame, some of the most pleasant memories and incidents of our early days cluster round the village school. The village school of Aberlour in my time was taught by George Gillan. A man portly in person and “stern to view,” he ruled us firmly and taught us well, considering the means that he had. A solitary map, as yellow as a duck’s foot, and on which an outline of the eastern hemisphere was dimly visible, hung above the fireplace. As we took our turns at the fire upon a winter’s day, that old map was scanned with eyes that never wearied of tracing its outlines. What a field lay within the four corners of that tattered map for our imaginations to revel in ! There was one object that brought a realization of that far East very near to us. A mulatto, sent by his parents to be taught and cared for by the dominie, was an object of interest to us all. For his instruction an object was occasionally brought ben from the master’s room to the school that never failed to draw all eyes towards it, namely, a large terrestrial globe. The first sight of a new planet could not have caused a greater sensation in the breast of an astronomer than did for the first time the sight of that revolving globe. On one occasion the dominie, pencil in hand, was eagerly tracing the outlines of continents and seas for the edification of the eastern mind, when he suddenly ceased, and, lifting the lid of his desk, took out from a recess “the muckle tag.” He placed the pencil in the mulatto’s hand, and ordered him to point out certain places upon the globe ; but instead of doing this, he buried the fingers of his right hand, pencil and all, amongst the

long black curls that covered his head. In the twinkling of an eye "the muckle tag" was laid on the malutto's head. Like a man at the flail, the dominie poured blow upon blow, until the poor fellow howled like a wild beast. Every heart in the school trembled and stood still. Never before was such a sight seen. For the remainder of that day a subdued silence reigned in the school. The sight of the mulatto's ebony face, covered with tears and contorted with shame (for he had reached to man's estate), left a depressing feeling upon us all for many a day. "The muckle tag" was a ponderous strap of leather about two feet in length, with one end cut into fingers two or three inches long. To harden the points, they had been slightly singed in the fire. The dreaded instrument of torture lay like a serpent coiled up in one of the pigeon holes of the dominie's desk. It was only upon special occasions that it was brought out. "The little tag" lay all day upon the top of the desk, ready at any moment. Though small in size, it bit sharply. The fingers that are writing these lines seem now to tingle at the bare recollection of "the little tag!" But there lay within that desk a thing that was dreaded more than any instrument of corporal punishment. Ye modern imitators of "Old Noll," that despise symbols and emblems of authority and cry "Away with such baubles," you ought to have been present upon the one occasion that I ever saw "the wig put on!" The foundation of that emblem of moral disgrace was an old blue bonnet adorned with old clouts and thrums of various colours. When the "maister left the skweel" and went ben the hoose for a few minutes (a thing that he seldom did in school hours), I have known a boy bold enough to lift the lid of the desk and take a peep at "the wig." The only boy in my time that ever "wore the wig" was looked upon as a moral leper. Never shall I forget the occasion when it was "put on," or the sight of that boy as he stood before the assembled school. Girls and boys were alike surprised, and seemed in some measure to feel the shame of the culprit's position in bringing disgrace upon the school.

The periodical visits of the minister broke in upon the monotony of the long school hours. When he opened the door and strode in, the master left his desk to meet him. As he uttered his usual salutation, "Peace be here," every voice was hushed.

On one occasion the weather was very cold. On entering the door he looked at the box where the peats were kept. This box was exactly like a large coffin without a lid. It stood against the wall on the left hand side of the door, and during the winter every boy was expected to bring a peat and throw it into this box. The minister looked at the box and said, "I hope, Geordie, that a' yer scholars bring their peats. If I am nae mista'en, I saw the ither day mair than ae loon pass the Manse wi' nae peat at a'." Then looking round the school, he asked, "Is there ony boy or girl here that doesna bring their peat reg'lar?" There was no response to this appeal, but there was more than one loon in the school whose conscience smote him. The writer, owing to the meagre size of his father's peat stack, had often brought only a half. It was nothing but a moral necessity that compelled the writer to substitute a half peat for a whole one, for he well knew the slur of being "a half-peat loon." But even good sometimes resulted from the sympathy and fellow-feeling of "puir loons" that could only add half a peat to warm the school. The writer made the friendship of one whose memory he dwells upon with mingled feelings of pleasure and thankfulness—thankful that he was early taken home to his Father's house, where there are no distinctions of rich and poor. Early one morning, it was said, Lizzie Farquhar opened her door, and found upon the step a child wrapped in a blanket. She took in the little stranger, warmed and fed him, and went to the minister to tell her tale. He answered, "Ye maun keep him, Lizzie, till we try an' fin' oot fa he belongs tae." That secret was never found out, and he never left Lizzie's humble home till he was carried to the kirkyard in his early manhood.

It was in the humble dwelling of poor Lizzie that the writer first made acquaintance with the Tinker of Elstow. When he opened the yellow pages of that well-worn "Pilgrim's Progress," and read and re-read the story of poor Christian, he discovered the secret that made Willie A—— different from other boys. If any boy or girl should happen to read these pages, I would like to impress upon them that they possess in that book a treasure that they cannot fully estimate at its value. In my early days books were really a treasure, which only well-to-do people possessed.

The only educational adornment upon the walls of the village school was the old yellow map referred to. It hung there neither



for use nor ornament. The dry monotony of the system of teaching in my time contrasts in a striking manner with the teaching of the present day. The very name of the "Shorter Catechism" brings a feeling of depression. The writer felt that the boy who exultingly answered the minister that "he was past redemption and turned the leaf," was a boy to be envied.

Compared to the present time, the schoolmasters had few holidays. There was one afternoon's play given once a quarter that never failed to interest us. When we saw the master bring from his parlour two canvas shot-bags full of bawbees, we knew that the "puir fowk" were waiting to receive their "doles." When the minister entered with his usual salutation, we were dismissed for the day. On one occasion, the writer and a few other boys were "keepit in" to finish our tasks. The minister and the dominie counted out the bawbees of the different recipients into little piles upon the desk lid. Jenny Dean was the first to be called in. The minister saluted her with, "Weel, Jenny, I'm tauld that the last time ye got yer siller ye called at The Cottage an' bocht half-a-mutchkin, an' took it hame in a bottle." "Half-a-mutchkin! Deil burn their tongues oot that telt ye sic a lee! It was only an aul' gill for Willie fan he tak's a sair belly." "Weel, Jenny," retorted the minister, "puir fowks' siller mauna be spent in whisky." Old Lizzie Farquhar was the next to come in. "Afore I gi'e ye the siller, Lizzie, I maun speak tae ye about that loon that ye're bringin' up in sic a manner. They tell me ye clead him like a gentleman. I saw him at the kirk wi' a coat wi' tails till't. I thoct ye had mair sense, Lizzie, than dae sic a thing." "Weel, sir," replied Lizzie, "I got some 'oo in a present, an' I span't mysel', and ye ken, sir, Willie has gane tae learn tae be a tailor, an' the makin' costs naething. He's nae verra strong, an' he needs tae be weel happit." "Aye, aye, that's a' verra weel; but puir folks maun never set their heads ower high for fear o' a doonfa'," said the minister. Every successive recipient that got their bawbees got also a crumb of sage advice in one form or other. But to the credit of our parish, the recipients were few.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE PACKMAN AND THE SWEETIEWIFE.

“Here country Jock, in bonnet blue,  
An’ eke his Sunday’s claes on,  
Rins after Meg wi’ roklay new,  
An’ sappy kisses lays on ;  
She’ll tauntin’ say, ‘ Ye silly coof,  
Be o’ ye’re gab mair sparin’ ;’  
He’ll tak’ the hint, and criesh her loof  
Wi’ what will buy her fairin’,  
Tae chow that day.”

MANY of the old institutions that flourished in the North sixty years ago are now only a semblance of what they were. Begging, at one time a flourishing institution, is prohibited by law. The packman, like the badger and the polecat, that used to be plentiful in our straths and glens, is all but extinct. A nondescript representation of him occasionally knocks at our door and spreads out his wares, but he has about as much similarity to the chapman of sixty years ago as a monkey has to a man. The packmen of those days were, in general, gentlemen. As in all professions, there were degrees of difference ; but the real aristocrat of the trade never laid his pack open at your door. No, even “the kitchen end” was seldom good enough to spread out his wares in ; he was generally invited “ben the hoose.” The following lines were written on a well-known packman. He was the first man ever seen in our parish with a tall white hat. “John the Gentleman’s” visit was an event. When he opened his pack and laid out his goods, the women folk gazed at them in speechless admiration. The graceful manner in which he lifted a shawl or gown-piece and hung it over his arm showed his skill in high art.

Spruce an’ trig, wi’ weel combed wig,  
His ruffled sark like snaw ;  
A velvet vest, wi’ rolling breast,  
A watch chain lang an’ sma’ ;  
A big gold seal, that told a tale  
Of riches in galore,  
Large an’ roon’, the seal hung doon,  
Like a knocker on a door.

His muckle pack, as big's a sack,  
 He from his shoulders threw ;  
 From his coat-tail, as big's a sail,  
 A napkin lang he drew,  
 Then wiped his face, wi' jaunty grace,  
 And stroked his shaven beard ;  
 Then cocked his wig, as deft and trig  
 As ony landed laird.

Then wi' a bang his ellwand lang  
 He on the table threw,  
 And said, " Guidwife, if siller's rife,  
 I'll sell ye something new :  
 A dress or shawl for kirk or ball  
 You can ha'e cheap the day ;  
 The like o' them, I tell ye, mem,  
 Has never come this way.

" With your twa een ye ne'er ha'e seen  
 Sic ribbons broad and narrow ;  
 Wi' hazel rung I will be dung  
 If ye can fin' their marrow.  
 'Tween you an' me, guidwife, ye see,  
 They're smuggled a' frae France ;  
 Ye'll ha'e them cheap, now tak' the heap,  
 An' dinna lose the chance.

" Look now at these : the combs will please  
 That smiling lassie there ;  
 They're tortoiseshell, and thin's a spill,  
 Fit for a lady's hair.  
 Here's something Scotch, this siller broach,  
 A thistle is its form ;  
 With half an e'e ye'll brawly see  
 The stone's a Cairngorm."

The huxter, or sweetiewife, is a modern institution compared to the pedlar. The formation of towns and villages in the North dealt a deathblow to the packman, but the sweetiewife found in them her best customers. The fairs that were periodically held in them brought a golden harvest to her. Every girl and boy in the parish found their way to the feeing market to spend their bawbees in "fairin's." In a remote rural parish the sight of the sweetiewife's stall yielded to them a pleasure that we, with our cheap railway trips, annual holidays, cattle shows, and public gatherings of various kinds, can form no idea of. Sometimes the scenes witnessed at fairs and feeing markets were of a rather rude and boisterous description, and shocked the sensibilities of the sober and well-conducted ; but it is not to be supposed that the ploughmen who upon such occasions got "roarin' fou" were anything but sober, well-conducted men in general. Let us consider

how monotonous the uneventful life of a ploughman was in those days. Twice a year he was free for the greater part of one day. At the feeling market he met his old fellow-servants, and for old acquaintance sake they had a dram together. Jane and Betty lent their fascinations to the occasion, and went in to "taste wi' them" in a tent filled with lads and lasses, ready to laugh at the most stale jokes. Long before the day was ended many of the ploughmen made fools of themselves in various ways. The lasses never failed to be an element of contention and danger. Were they not in general the cause of the fights that took place at feeling markets? Sandy "cleeked" hold of a lass that was escorted through the fair by Tam, and tried to pull her from the arm of her lover. In the melee her dress was torn and her "fairin's" strewn upon the ground. In a moment Tam and Sandy closed in deadly combat. She that was the cause of the fight tried in vain to separate them. Her screams brought a crowd around, and the combatants were dragged apart, bleeding, and their clothes soiled and torn. They vowed deadly vengeance against each other. The friends of the respective parties began to acquiesce in the justice of their quarrel, and the end of this was that the war was renewed upon an extended basis. A real Donnybrook commenced, and broken heads and bloody noses were plentiful. The lasses, greetin' and wailin', dragged their lovers from the fray.

After an event of this kind, the recruiting-sergeant put in his appearance. Sandy, who had lost his lass and got his licks to the bargain, rather than face the chaff of his fellow-ploughmen, took "the shillin'," and marched off next morning "wi' a ribbon at his lug," a soberer if not a wiser man. I have heard my mother tell of poor fellows who enlisted under such circumstances. When a resident in Aberdeen, she had daily to pass the gate of the barracks at a time when the poor north country recruits were being drilled. She noticed one poor fellow amongst them from her native parish. He seemed broken-hearted. The drill-sergeant called out in an angry voice, "Do you not know your right hand from your left? Look to the right." The poor fellow replied, "If I had looked to the right, I wadna been here."

There were other features of the fair more pleasing. The sweetiewives were there with all their tempting wares spread out

to feast the eyes of the girls and boys who clustered round their stalls, eager to invest their bawbees in the various commodities displayed thereon. When we see a man or woman rise to the top of their profession, it is often a proof that they possess qualities that have lifted them above their fellows. If this is true in general, it was especially true in regard to Meg Elgin. She was beyond all question the most eminent sweetiewife of her time. Like John Gilpin, she was a citizen of credit and renown within a radius of fifty miles around the ancient capital of the North. Meg was known to almost every household. Her juvenile customers gazed with wonder and admiration upon the contents of her basket. There lay within its ample dimensions more wonderful things than they had ever dreamt of. Her dolls bore a striking resemblance in dress and shape to Meg herself. She was short in stature but ample in face, which was of a shining scarlet hue, heightened, no doubt, by exposure to the bracing mountain air and the morning drams that she said she was obliged to take for "the win' on her stamack." When she sojourned in Aberlour, she quartered herself in the house of James Grant. Being a quiet, pious man, he was greatly shocked at Meg's unruly tongue. His cousin Nelly was a spinster of repute, and lived next door. She made several attempts to throw the sweetiewife out of her kinsman's house, but had always to retire without effecting her purpose. When obliged to retreat, she would fire off her big guns at "the nasty, ill-tongued, drunken limmer! fitter tae sleep in a barn than anaith the roof o' a God-fearin' man!" The pious widower remained passive during the fiery conflicts between the belligerents, and Meg continued in possession. Her market properties lay undisturbed from one fair day to another in the shoemaker's barn. In the village square, where the market was held Meg claimed the best stance, and had her claim allowed. On one occasion an Aberdeen huxter, known as "Treacle Tam," set up his stall upon Meg's freehold. He had arrived with his spouse and properties on a cart in the early morning. When Meg came upon the scene and saw her stance occupied, without saying a word, she caught hold of one of the poles that supported the stall, and with a wrench pulled it from the ground. In a moment the stall was a wreck. Treacle sticks, gingerbread, and sweets lay heaped together on the ground. Tam's wife flew at the irate Meg, who

defended herself with the tent pole. When Tam appeared, he too made an onset upon her, but she called out, "Haud awa', ye lang-luggit selipe! fat brocht ye here wi' that drunken limmer tae disgrace the pairish o' Aberlour? May the deevil droon ye baith in yer ain traicle cask that ye mak' that stinking stuff oot o' tae pooshin puir fowks' bairns."

Some may be disposed to smile at this record of "a sweetie-wife," but let such remember that she carried a savour about her of the city whose name had been affixed to her own as an honourable distinction. On her stall there were displayed works of art, dolls, jumping-jacks, horses in wood and in gingerbread, and pigs of the same material, their skins covered with sweeties. Everything was there to tempt the taste and fascinate the eyes of the children, who had but few opportunities of seeing such displays.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE NAMELESS BUSH.

“And her alone he lo’ed, and lo’ed her from a child.”

IT will be admitted by every one that has stood upon the site of the old Castle of Rothes, that for situation and surrounding scenery it is not surpassed by any of the old castles in the North. The antiquary has searched in vain the musty records of the past to find the date of its first erection. Tradition is also silent on the subject. In 1238, Eva de Mortach was Domina de Rothes. In 1263 she made a grant of her lands in Inverlochty to the Cathedral of Moray. In that year Haco, the aged King of Norway, made his last invasion upon these islands. He came with a large and powerful fleet to the Firth of Clyde, and a number of his men landed at Largs, where they were routed and driven back by a Scottish host. In October of the same year the dreaded Haco died in Orkney.

It may be inferred from the natural surroundings of the Castle of Rothes that the spot where it stood would be occupied in one form or other from the very earliest times. Possibly a wooden structure was first erected upon the hill, as we know that erections of this description were common in Moray.

Beautiful as the view from the castle hill is at the present day, it was even more romantic when the heiress of Inverlochty made over her lands to the Cathedral of Moray. At that time the surrounding hills were clothed by natural woods, abounding in game of all sorts, and the Spey was famous for its abundance of salmon. The wolf had his lair in “The Doonies,” and prowled around the Conrock, close to the castle gates.

Around the grey ruins of many of the old castles of Scotland there linger stories of the dark deeds done within their ancient walls in the days of raid and rapine. It would have been strange if the old Castle of Rothes had no tale of the past to tell. In my

early boyhood, the story of Jenny Hossack had a powerful fascination for my young mind. Her ghostly form could be seen, it was said, sitting at a corner of the ruined wall, rocking a cradle all the night long and singing the following cradle song :—

“Hush, bonnie bairnie,  
Close your blue eye,  
The ravens are croaking  
On the Conrock so high ;  
The wild winds rock them,  
But never to sleep,  
All the long night  
They vigil do keep.

“Hush, bonnie bairnie,  
The polecat and fox  
And the owls are abroad  
From their holes in the rocks ;  
The nightjar is booming  
Around the old tower,  
And midnight's the time  
When spirits have power.

“Hush, bonnie bairnie,  
Dry your salt tear ;  
The angels are round you,  
There is nothing to fear ;  
The Saviour is near  
To guard and to keep  
His precious wee lambs,  
Both awake and asleep.”

Tradition says that Jenny Hossack was foster-mother to the only child of a lord of Rothes Castle. The mother died in giving birth to the child, and Jenny was chosen to nurse her. So faithfully did she fulfil her trust that she never left her side until the day of her untimely death. From her infancy the child seems to have been imbued with a love of nature. To clamber up the rugged face of the Conrock was her delight at all seasons. When the summer sunshine filled the beautiful vale with its light and warmth, the river-side was her favourite resort. There she was wont to meet the children of the laird of Arndilly, and the eldest of them, a beautiful boy, rowed the little maiden in his boat. As long as they were children, her father made no objection ; but when the boy grew up to manhood, he discovered the attachment that existed between his daughter and the young Master of Arndilly, and sternly forbade her ever to see him again or to go near the river-side. She obeyed the latter part of her father's command, but was wont to meet her lover at “The Wishing Well,” a



beautiful spring that in my boyhood went by the name Toperun-Donich. It rose in the face of the green brae on the east side of the back burn of Rothies, and was at one time surrounded by a wild thicket of sloe and bramble bushes. From the earliest times the well had been frequented by devotees, who threw into it their offerings of beads, pins, and other personal ornaments. I well remember seeing the bottom of the well strewn with pins. But interesting as the well was, a bush that grew beside it was still more so. It was known as "The Nameless Bush." None could tell its name, nor had anyone ever seen a plant or bush of the same description. One midsummer eve, "The Rose of Rothies," with her foster-mother, went to "The Wishing Well" to cast in their offerings. Matilda dropped in the pater bead from her rosary, with a prayer for the safety of the noble youth who had gone to fight for the Holy Sepulchre. The prayer had hardly risen from her lips before she was embraced in the arms of the soldier of the cross, who had returned safe and crowned with glory. The lovers sat down by the well, and, hand in hand, tasted in that brief interview the highest pleasure granted to the pure and faithful here below. The foster-mother sat there too, pondering deeply in her heart the obstacles that lay in the path of the faithful lovers, when she was alarmed by a rustle in the brushwood behind her. At that moment a figure stole stealthily behind the lovers, and plunged his dirk up to the haft in the defenceless back of the young soldier, who fell lifeless into the arms of his lover. She was carried home to the castle a raving maniac, and placed in what was known ever afterwards as "The Cradle Tower," for there she sat rocking her own cradle until death came and took her to join in heaven the spirit of her murdered lover. It was never known who the assassin was, but, strange to tell, upon the very spot where the blood of the young soldier oozed into the ground there sprang up a beautiful plant that grew into a bush. The leaves resembled a cross, and in autumn they became scarlet, while the berries it bore were white.

I cannot tell if "The Nameless Bush" is still growing by Toperun-Donich, but it was no myth in my early days. It is a singular thing to find, in the remote vale of Rothies, a legend of this kind, so nearly resembling Shakespeare's Venus with the dead body of Adonis. She says:—

“And in his blood, that on the ground lay spill’d,  
A purple flower sprung up, chequer’d with white,  
Resembling well his pale cheeks and the blood  
Which in round drops upon their whiteness stood ;  
She crops the stalk, and in the breach appears  
Green dropping sap, which she compares to tears.”

It is well to cherish these harmless legends ; they take a deep hold upon the mind. Jenny Hossack was at one time, to me, as real a personage as Her Majesty Queen Victoria. To my young mind she was not only real, but, like many other children, I believed her to be the donor of all the bairns sent to bless the humble homes on the burnside of Rothies.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A MODEL SCHOOLMASTER.

"Who watches o'er the bent of youth,  
And while a paltry stipend earning,  
He sows the richest seeds of learning,  
And tills their minds with proper care,  
And sees them their due produce bear."

ROBERT LLOYD, 1733.

**P**ERHAPS the greatest boon vouchsafed to a rural parish is a good schoolmaster. Apart from his teaching abilities, his character ought to be of such a high standard as to influence his pupils, for we know that the young minds are greatly influenced by the individuality of their teachers. Many notable men have borne testimony to this.

Mr. George Gillan had been for many years schoolmaster in the parish of Aberlour. He was succeeded by Mr. Murdoch, M.A., a graduate of Aberdeen University. Until his advent geography was only taught to one or two pupils. Upon the revolving globe he made geography a special item in his curriculum. Maps were hung upon the walls that hitherto had been bare of any educational or pictorial prints. In a short time Mr. Murdoch "got a church." When it became known that he was to be succeeded by Mr. Grant, the late esteemed schoolmaster of the parish, the people of Aberlour rejoiced greatly. He was well-known to them personally, and his high reputation as a teacher was widely recognised. Young men from surrounding parishes went to his school to "finish" under his able tuition. He was as fine a type of Strathspey man as could have been found between the two Craighellachies. An accomplished violinist, he composed several fine Strathspeys, and rendered them with true Highland taste and spirit. His intimate knowledge of Strathspey music made him an authority upon the difference of the time that should be played to the real Highland reel and the Strathspey proper. The violin was only one of Mr. Grant's accomplishments. As an angler he was perhaps the most successful and the neatest at throwing a

line on "the run o' Spey." His inborn love of flowers made the schoolhouse garden a perfect paradise. To sit with him there of an evening and listen to the graphic account that he was wont to give of his adventures with the rod and gun never failed to entrance the listener. His hospitality was unbounded, and dispensed with a grace that was characteristic of a true-born Strathspey man. It was with reluctance that he permitted me to publish the following verses. The reader will see that along with other accomplishments he possessed the poetical gift in no small degree.

## SONG—BANKS OF NETHY.

Dearest lassie, come wi' me  
An' scent the flow'rs that feed the bee,  
An' pu' the nuts frae hazel tree  
In woods o' Abernethy.

The groves are vocal wi' the sang  
O' little birds the trees amang;  
The cuckoo's note re-echoes lang  
Through woods o' Abernethy.  
Dearest lassie, &c.

Oh, Jeannie, lass, while through the braes  
We gather'd hips an' hawthorn slaes,  
Too short to me seem'd summer days  
Wi' you in Abernethy.  
Dearest lassie, &c.

Red evrans frae a heath'ry sheet,  
Ripe brawlans an' blaeberries sweet  
I'll gi'e to thee if me you meet  
Upon the banks o' Nethy.  
Dearest lassie, &c.

Oh, Donald, lad, ye ken fu' weel  
My heart to you's been true an' leal,  
Since bairnies runnin' through the dell,  
Beside the banks o' Nethy.  
Dearest lassie, &c.

When I your locks to rowans tied,  
An' you my cheeks wi' brambles dyed,  
I promised then to be your bride,  
Upon the banks o' Nethy.  
Dearest lassie, &c.

My lowly shieling is nae braw,  
Nae lofty rooms, nor painted ha',  
But wi' my Jane I'll share it a',  
Upon the banks o' Nethy.  
Dearest lassie, &c.

Cairngorm's wint'ry snow  
 May down the rocky Garvault blow ;  
 But Jane nae could nor want shall know  
 Wi' me on banks o' Nethy.  
 Dearest lassie, &c.

I ha'e a craft, wi' twa-three kye,  
 Four score o' sheep, an' lambs forby ;  
 Wi' you, my Jane, I'll live an' die  
 Upon the banks o' Nethy.  
 Dearest lassie, &c.

When the late Miss Grant of Aberlour attained her majority, a party of ninety local gentlemen met to celebrate the event. Mr. Charles Grant was in the chair. Mr. Wharton Duff of Orton remarked to the chairman that the event ought to be embalmed in verse. Two days after, Mr. Grant wrote the following lines :—

#### NELL OF ABERLOUR.

When ev'ning spreads its sable cov'ring  
 Over yonder Tuscan tower,  
 The blissful hour is then returning  
 To meet sweet Nell of Aberlour ;  
 Her breath is sweeter than the zephyr  
 Wafting perfumes through this dell ;  
 Ye fickle fates, grant me favour,  
 My young, my charming, lovely Nell.

Sweet's the harebell's early blossom,  
 Sweet as cowslips in the dell ;  
 Sweet are rosebuds when they open,  
 But sweeter far is lovely Nell.  
 Their fragrance gives a transient pleasure,  
 Their beauty's fading every hour,  
 Unlike to her who is my treasure,  
 Lovely Nell of Aberlour.

Cairngorm's wild and dreary,  
 Tow'ring hills are frowning nigh ;  
 Through Glens'an from rocky eyrie  
 Eagles soar with lonely cry.  
 There my fancy lov'd to wander,  
 Where the stormy tempests lour,  
 But chief o'er all my thoughts now ponder  
 On sweet Nell of Aberlour.

Benrinn's moors I've travers'd over,  
 With my trusty dog and gun ;  
 I have angl'd Spey's deep river  
 And its silver monarch won.  
 These sportings are but vain and fleeting  
 To beguile a vacant hour,  
 May she who has my heart in keeping  
 Be mine, sweet Nell of Aberlour.

Many of the Grants appear to have possessed the true interpretation of Strathspey music. The late Mr. Donald Grant, of Grantown, was the best player of reel music in Strathspey in his time. Like Neil Gow, he had two sons nearly equal to their father in handling the bow. There were also two brothers, William and John Grant, locally known as the two "Glennies," having been born in Glenarder, in the parish of Knockando. The eldest brother was accomplished in classic music, but both were famous players of Strathspeys. John I can well remember as a teacher of dancing. He was wont to stand fiddle in hand, playing it while his pupils went through the evolutions of a quadrille or country dance. If they failed in correctly going through the figure, he was wont to go through it for their edification, playing his violin the while, with a nimbleness and grace that astonished his pupils. Both brothers were noted for their graceful figures. So was Mr. Charles Grant. He was perhaps as fine a specimen of a Highland gentleman as could have been found in Strathspey, and the writer has dedicated to his memory the following lines :—

My heart is sad. Alas ! no more  
He'll meet me at the schoolhouse door ;  
Nor e'er again will we explore.  
His garden sweet,  
Where we were wont in days of yore  
At eve to meet.

That schoolhouse garden, neat and trim,  
Was paradise to me and him ;  
There till the red moon showed her rim,  
And stars appear,  
We watched the circling hills grow dim,  
In converse dear.

There on his dear-loved garden seat,  
His manly form, so spruce and neat,  
With beaming face he would repeat,  
And fluent tongue,  
Details of many a hardy feat  
When he was young.

Quick his celtic blood would rise,  
And fiery feeling filled his eyes,  
When he played " oor ain Strathspeys "  
With magic hand,  
The soul of melody would rise  
At his command.

His matchless skill in celtic strains  
Made the blood dance within our veins,  
Till we forgot life's ills and pains  
In rapturous trance ;  
We thought the worldling's empty gains  
Not worth a dance.

His nimble hand now stiffened lies,  
That dressed by art such matchless flies :  
They made the silver salmon rise  
    To certain death ;  
No more, alas ! he'll scan the skies,  
    Nor don his graith.

By flowing Spey no more he'll stand,  
Nor weild again his matchless wand,  
That made the curling line expand  
    Like a living thing—  
That by the power of his hand  
    Was made to spring.

With earth and earthly sports he's done,  
At dawn no more he'll hail the sun ;  
He'll don no more his bag and gun,  
    To tread the hill ;  
His lengthened thread of life is spun,  
    And he lies still.

Kind hands have laid him to his rest  
Amidst the scenes he loved the best,  
Where waves the pine, his ancient crest,  
    For ever green ;  
Lie lightly, earth, upon his breast—  
    Most kind, I ween.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### PARISH BENEFACTORS.

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold."—PROVERBS.

"For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat. I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me."—ST. MATTHEW.

**S**IXTY years ago the material condition of the people of Aberlour was very different to what it is at the present time.

Lord Fife owned a large portion of the parish. His agent drew the rents, but not a penny was expended by his Lordship for the furtherance of any means to improve the mental or social condition of the inhabitants. There was only one school and one church, no Sunday school, and no institution of any kind where young men or boys could meet to spend the evening in mental improvement or social enjoyment. It is hardly possible for the younger portion of the inhabitants to fully realise the changed conditions that they are now enjoying. These changed conditions have been mainly brought about by the liberality of men who, by the wise disposal of their means, have benefited the parish, and laid the inhabitants under an everlasting debt of gratitude to its benefactors. One of them was the late lamented Mr. Fleming, whose benefactions to the place and to the people are wisely bestowed on objects that will be of lasting and real benefit to the parish. The hospital that has been built and endowed by his liberality will always remain a memorial of his Christian philanthropy. I can well remember more than one epidemic that devastated many a home in the village. Had there been at the time such an institution in the place many lives might have been saved. There can now be little doubt that the undrained state of the village and the bad water were the causes of the frequent occurrence of typhoid and scarlet fever, but happily all this is changed for the better. In the Fleming Hall the parish now possesses a centre where the old and young can meet together



to interchange their opinions upon the social and political topics of the day. A library and a reading-room is a priceless boon to any parish, and the young people of Aberlour are evidently fully alive to the benefits to be derived from them. When the foot bridge is thrown across the Spey, the objects that the late Mr. Fleming had projected for the benefit of the parish will have been completed. But valuable as these benefactions are, they are only a tithe of what he gave to other benevolent objects. It is truly said of him by those who knew him best that "he gave to the poor," and he has freely bestowed his substance for their benefit. He was in the fullest sense of the word a humble man. When prosperity rewarded his wise industry, he was never "lifted up" above his fellows, and his memory will be held in everlasting remembrance in the priceless gifts that he has bestowed upon the parish of Aberlour.

Among the many social and material changes that have taken place in the parish during the last sixty years, the establishment of an Orphanage is the most remarkable and interesting in its results. Every schoolboy in the village knew that Campbell's park was forbidden ground, but that was a greater incitement for them to trespass within its boundary, although Captain Campbell was well known to them as a kindly man. He had a habit of absently shaking his head from side to side. It was said the habit was due to a fracture in his skull that he received in battle, and the fracture was held together by gold clasps. Whether there was any truth in the report or not the writer is unable to say. The fishing pool behind the village was known as "Campbell's Peel." Being related to the Elchies family, he had many privileges that other tenants had not. The only enclosed land on their estate of Allachie was "Campbell's Park." We are glad to see that his house at the east end of the village is still standing, little changed. It was the only white-washed house in it. The garden was well stocked with fruit trees and bushes, but "the park" was in all respects "a barren heritage," and we believe that it was very little improved when the Rev. Mr. Jupp took up his residence in the parish in a small cottage in 1875, with four little boys—truly a small beginning, when we look at the extent of the establishment and its surroundings at the present day. Mr. Jupp has by his own energy, self-denial, and indefatigable industry personally

supervised the work, and transformed "Campbell's Park" into a very Garden of Eden. Where thistles and dockens struggled into leaf, roses, lilies, and all the varied flowers of summer grow and bloom to perfection.

I was fortunate in being able to visit the beautiful church connected with the Orphanage on the day set apart as a floral festival or thanksgiving. The beauty of the flowers and the taste shown in the decoration of the church surprised me. The roses were equal to any that I have seen on a show table. It is hardly possible to describe the beauty and fine proportions of the interior of the church. It is as near perfect as a sacred edifice can be made, and it is pleasant to reflect that it owes its inception to the late Miss Grant of Aberlour, who contributed £2000 towards its erection. It was completed at a cost of £4000 by the Rector, the Rev. Mr. Jupp. The church is dedicated to St. Margaret of Scotland. It is to the munificence of the late William Grant of Elchies that it owes its endowment.

Beautiful as the church and its surroundings are, we turn with a feeling of wonder and admiration to the Orphanage and the work that is carried on within it. Twenty-six years ago, the embryo institution consisted of four boys. The small seed has expanded in a marvellous degree, until it now numbers 300 boys and girls. As the number of children multiplied the buildings necessary to house them have increased to the size of a small village. All the separate buildings are replete with every educational and domestic appliance. More than £100,000 has been expended by the Warden since he began his great and glorious work in a cottage, and all this enormous sum of money has been voluntarily contributed to the institution. It has all passed through the hands of the Warden and been wisely expended. Every department of the institution bears testimony to the great business qualities of Canon Jupp. To this must be added the spiritual and moral influence that he exerts over the minds of his numerous family. He has been, we may say without irreverence, "a father to the fatherless," and who can estimate the record of such a man's work? Many an orphan boy and girl will have reason to bless and revere his name, and carry throughout their lives a grateful and pleasant memory of the happy time that they spent in the Aberlour Orphanage.

Notwithstanding his multifarious duties as Warden of the Orphanage, Canon Jupp has found time to take a real interest in municipal and social movements connected with the place, and he now worthily fills the office of Provost, so long and honourably held by his predecessor, Major M'Gowan, who during the many years he filled the office did so much to make the village of Aberlour what it is. He, too, will always remain in the front rank of its benefactors.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### EMIGRATION—MODES OF TRAVELLING—ILLUMINANTS.

"Oh, why left I my hame,  
Why did I cross the deep?  
Oh, why left I the land  
Where my forefathers sleep?"

**E**MIGRATION from the North of Scotland was a rare event in a parish. Well do we remember the sensation caused in ours when the news spread through it that a well-known man and his wife had resolved to emigrate with their large family to Australia. The very name of Botany Bay at that time made people's blood curdle. The recital of deeds done there by the convicts had spread over the North in an exaggerated form, and filled the minds of the people with dread and horror. The day that the family referred to quitted the village left on our mind a memory that time cannot efface. No trait in the Scottish character is more observable than their love of home and country. Their poetry abounds with the deep fervency and heartfelt sentiments of devotion to their native land. We have seldom or ever witnessed a sadder event than the parting scene that took place on the village green, where the inhabitants had assembled to say farewell to the emigrants as they left their native place, never to return. Had not the father of the family been the son of a farmer with some means, he could not have borne the expense of emigrating to the antipodes with a family. A voyage to Australia when Queen Victoria began to reign was in all respects a great and expensive undertaking. I believe that the time they were on the voyage was about nine months. Nearly two years after leaving, news came that they had landed, and that one of the girls had died on board ship and was consigned to a watery grave. At the sad news many eyes were filled with tears, and mothers bewailed the death of the lovable, fair-haired girl.

Emigration from the North of Scotland sixty years ago was for many reasons a rare event. Even migration was a diffi-

cult matter. Well do I remember the obstacles that beset my departure from Speyside. Money was a scarcer commodity then than it is at present. A box of certain dimensions had to be made according to the size carried by the mail coach. With the limited box and a light purse, I travelled in a cart to Keith to meet the mail coach that passed there from Inverness. While waiting there for its arrival, my father, who had on several occasions travelled by it, with other sage advice, advised me to pay great deference to the guard. When his horn sounded and the coach drew up at the inn door, the great man descended from the boot, resplendent in a scarlet coat, with a broad leathern belt across his shoulder. Never before had I seen a man that impressed me more as being "a man of authority." When he saw my box he at once took exception to its size. After being assured that it was the exact prescribed dimensions, he condescendingly accepted a coin of the realm bearing a likeness of George IV., and passed the box into the boot. Fresh horses were yoked to the coach, the passengers mounted to the top, and the mighty man blew his horn until his scarlet face seemed like a ball of fire. When the great structure began to sway and rock, a feeling of alarm drove all thought of sadness from the heart in anxiety for personal safety. By the time that Huntly was reached all fear of the coach overturning had vanished, and now scenes familiar in song and story presented themselves. There flowed the Deveron, with the lasses that inspired the famous air that we had danced so often to. Then came the Glens of Foudland. That by report was the scene of many weird stories, and above all it was the place where bonnie Jeannie Gordon wished she was in when in her sorrow she said—

"Oh, if I were in the bonny Glens of Foudland,  
Where hunting oftimes I hae been,  
I could go to bonnie Castle Gordon  
Without either stocking or sheen."

When "the tap o' Benachie" appeared in view, standing out in relief against the eastern sky, I longed to be upon its top and see at its back the Gadie with its ever-living music. I even made bold to approach the great man, and enquired if he could tell me whereabouts the battle of Harlaw was fought. With a scornful voice he replied, "I ken naethin' about sic a place. It may be at

the back o' Beelzebub for a' that I ken or care about it." As we entered the suburbs of the Granite City, the great man in uniform "blew a blast baith loud and lang." Many women folks in the streets along which we passed lifted their window blinds (for darkness had fallen) to look at the great lumbering mail and the reeking horses that were being driven at a gallop for the entertainment of pedestrians and bystanders in the streets. When they slackened pace and were unyoked by the inn door in the market-place, the poor animals were led away to their stable like drowned rats. Fortunately a Speyside friend met me by appointment, and took care of me and my belongings. On leaving the market-place, we had to go the full length of Union Street to reach his residence. The sight that met my eyes as we entered it made an impression on my mind that has never left it. I had heard of gas, but I had only formed a vague idea of its illuminating power. The sight of the double row of gas lamps along the full length of that unrivalled street was to me, a country-bred loon who had only seen the light of a penny dip or a cruzie, both beautiful and bewildering. Since the night that I stood and looked, along Union Street I have seen a good many cities and towns lit up with gas, but in none of them have I looked upon a prettier sight than that street presented with its rows of lamps receding in beautiful perspective.

The advancement made in illuminants during the late Queen's reign is as notable as any that has been effected for domestic and public comfort in the last sixty years. At the time when Her Gracious Majesty ascended the throne many a poor man's house had no other illuminant than "the fir can'le." The "peer man," as the article was called that held the split laths of bog fir, stood in the corner by the fire. When night closed in it was lifted on to the middle of the hearth, the resinous fir lath was lighted at one end in the fire, and then stuck into the cleft iron hand that held it in its grasp. The stalk of the "peer man" was about four feet in length; the lower end was set into a round stone that kept it erect and steady. The feeding of the "peer man" during the winter nights was taken in turns by the young folks of the family. An iron rack the length of the fireplace took the place of a mantel shelf. It was kept filled with long split fir laths, dry and ready to feed the "peer man." When the fir

"can'le" was placed within his jaws, a girl or boy stood and regulated the light by moving its burning end up and down in see-saw fashion, and lifting and placing it forward as it became consumed. When the end was reached, another "can'le" was "raxed doon fae the rack," lighted at the expiring end of its predecessor, and took its place.

I was under the belief that no more primitive mode of illumination could be found in the King's dominions until I had occasion recently to visit the Shetland Isles. Being the guest of a doctor there, I frequently accompanied him on his professional visits. On a Sunday afternoon he had occasion to make a visit to a crofter's house on the margin of a very inaccessible voe. In reaching it we had to cross a wide stretch of peaty moorland with deep bogs full of water. Before the doctor was able to leave the crofter's house night came down very dark. "John," said the doctor, "get your lantern and light us across the moor." "I am sorry, doctor, I hae nae sic a thing," replied the poor crofter; "but I'll gie ye a blink across wi' the old Shetland light." While speaking, he lifted a long-legged tongs from the hearth, and with it two newly lighted peats, and laid them flat one above the other; then he placed two dried peats under his left arm, and lifted the two lighted peats with the long tongs. His wife opened the door, and we sallied forth, John leading the way holding aloft the two burning peats. Being fanned by a brisk north wind, they cast a wonderfully clear light around us for several yards. On our way we had to shelter in the lee of a crofter's cottage from a fierce blast of hail; still the peats burned on. At the end of a mile and a half, when we parted with the primitive islander, the peats were still alight; the two carried by John to replace them were not required. During a three months' holiday in the islands, I became pretty familiar with the light of "the Shetland lantern" passing across the moors from one crofter's cottage to another. Amongst the people I saw many primitive habits that were familiar to me in my boyhood; but in another decade or two these will have given place to modern ideas of dress and a new class of household conveniences, and the steel spade and fork will replace the most primitive agricultural implement that I have ever seen, namely, "the Shetland spade."

The most remarkable thing in the Highlands of Scotland sixty

years ago was the use made of natural and animal products in supplying domestic and personal wants. The fleece of their sheep clad them, the produce of their farms fed them, with the milk of their cows, and the wick of their oil lamps was found by the waterside. The rushes that grew there strong and lengthy were gathered and stripped of their rind, the beautiful white pith within was carefully tied up in parcels, hung on a nail near the fire, and used as wicks for the oil lamps. When the flame was required to cast a stronger light, two or three wicks were used. The sauch bush by the burnside supplied the material for lingals to the flail and halters to the horses and cows upon the place. The sight of a family fireside in the Highlands when the late Queen was crowned was indeed a contrast to a fireside gathering in the coronation year of her successor. When darkness closed the short winter's day, the family gathered round the wide and open hearth in a circle, the spinning wheels were brought out, trimmed, and set in motion by the deft hands of the daughters and maidens of the house; the old father or grandfather got out his muckle gully knife to split the fir log that was to feed the "peer man," while song and story went round. As books were a rarity, the night's entertainment consisted of oral tales and ballads of love and war.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### OUR MITHER TONGUE—FUNERAL PRACTICES.

“ My mither tongue, ye’ll haud the grip  
While words ha’e power to teach ;  
While feelin’s link themsel’s  
To blyth or dowie speech ;  
While hopes and fears, an’ joys an’ griefs,  
While loves are said or sung,  
Ye’ll haud the grip in spite o’ a’,  
My couthie mither tongue.  
Till suns grow cauld an’ Nature’s sel’  
Creeps feckless ower a rung,  
Ye canna dee, ye winna dee,  
Dear Scotia’s mither tongue.”

THOSE who have wandered “ far frae hame ” know how pleasant it is to hear the music of their “ mither tongue ” in a strange land. Some may smile at the idea of the doric speech being musical. The words of very many of our beautiful national songs are pure doric.

“ A wee bird cam’ to oor ha’ door,  
An’ O, he whistled rairly,  
An’ aye the owercome o’ his sang  
Was waes me for Prince Charlie.”

The doric tongue is not only musical, but it is expressive in a high degree. There are people gifted with “ an ear ” for the different accents of the doric tongue and the different local dialects. There is what may be called the educated accent of the Scotch tongue. The late eminent Dr. Guthrie possessed this faculty to a high degree. To have heard him read to 139th Psalm was to listen enraptured with eloquence that the greatest tragedian could not have surpassed. We have heard it said that the people of Inverness speak the best English in Scotland with the native accent. Whether they have any claim to such a distinction or not is a question that we cannot answer. There is no doubt that some of our local dialects are anything but musical, but if they are deficient in this respect they make up for it in

force of expression. And if the people of Skirdustan sixty years ago could not lay claim to a musical accent, no parish in the North could boast of a more fluent expression of forcible speech, while every man in it was distinguished by special traits of character, and those of them who imbibed the spirit of "Macallan" developed under its influence traits that showed them in a new light. Poor Johnny M'Kay bemoaned the loss of his dear mother in the melodious speech of his native town, Inverness. Another man, remarkable for his taciturnity, was wont to expatiate to his listeners in fluent grammatical English.

"Lees me on drink,  
It gives us mair than either school or college;  
It wakens wit, it kindles lear,  
An' primes us fou o' knowledge."

No one in the parish was better known for ready wit and facetious humour than old "Craggans." When he got "a dram" he never failed to denounce in vehement language against the "new-fangled" practices that were creeping in and undermining the fine old institutions so long established in the parish. When the late Rev. Mr. Wilson died, on the day of his funeral the parishioners assembled in front of the Manse to escort his remains out of the parish to be interred at Banff, his native place. While the people stood around the door waiting for them to "lift," they noticed that "Craggans" went about fuming and muttering to himself. At last he went up to the late Mr. Green of Ruthrie and said, "Dod, sir, fat dae ye think? Are we gaun tae get neither bite nor sup? Are they gaun tae beery the aul' man like a beast? Dod, this coves the gowan!" Soon after the minister's funeral, "Craggans" took seriously ill. He felt that he was drawing near his end, and calling his sister to his bedside, said to her, "Lassie, sen' tae the Kirkton for the souter tae tak' aff my beard. I'm finished at last. I ken there's nae siller in the hoose; ye maun sell the hummel stirk an' get plenty meat an' drink in, an' lay me doon decently like a Christian. An' if ye hear ony ane at my beerial speakin' ill o' me, keep a close mou', lassie, for I'll nae hear them."

At the time of poor "Craggans'" death there lived in the village a tall, powerful man with one eye. It was said that he lost his other eye in a funeral fight. No matter how distant

the graveyard was from the house of the deceased, the remains were carried to it on hand-spokes by his relations and friends, and it was the custom to carry spirits to the graveyard to be drunken after the interment. But if the distance to it was some length, the coffin was set down on the ground and whisky was handed round. The funeral at which the man referred to lost his eye took place in Glenlivet. After crossing a burn on the way to the churchyard, they set down the coffin, had a drink, quarrelled and fought, and our newly resident villager got "the reddin stroke." His eye was knocked out with the end of a hand-spoke. True or not true, this was the tale told about "muckle gleyed Sandy."

The change that has taken place in the manner of conducting funerals in Scotland at the present day is in remarkable contrast to the way they were conducted in the past. Not that they were then irreverently conducted, for Scotch people are naturally reverently disposed, and they look upon death as a solemn event. In the early years of the last century there were many ceremonious practices in the dwelling where a death occurred. The first thing done was to stop the clock and cover its face with a cloth. This was also done in the houses of near relations. When the corpse was "streekit" the cat was locked in a room or carried to a neighbour's house, to be kept there till after the funeral. A bowl of salt was placed on a table in the room where the corpse was laid. On the table the Bible was also placed ready for the "sitters-up" to read during the solemn hours of night. Young as I was, I have on several occasions "sitten up" to watch the dead and read chapters from "The Holy Word" selected by my elders. Even at the present time I have not forgotten the solemnity of such events. The great clock at Balmoral was stopped when our late beloved Queen breathed her last. I leave the solution of these old practices to the interpreters of our "folklore." There is little doubt about their antiquity. Those referred to are not by any means the only ceremonies that were practiced at the time of a death in the family. Happily the days of feasting and dram-drinking at funerals are passed away, and the solemn rite is consecrated by reading and prayer. During the time of the late Mr. Wilson's ministry in Aberlour, men and women were carried to the grave from their homes without any religious ceremony at either place.

The absence of the usual bottle and the basket of bread and cheese at the funeral of Mr. Wilson was more a matter of economy than an act of reformation. James Moir, the bellman's, remarks on that event were pertinent. "They've ta'en him awa' tae beery in his ain place. If he had had ony say in the maitter he wud hae objected tae sic a lot o' needless expense, an' been laid doon in the corner that I keepit for him ahin' the gairden dyke. It's maybe jist as weel they've ta'en him awa', for the aul' miller an' him wad hae never lien sae close tae ither in peace."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### WILLOX THE WITCHFINDER—TOMINTOUL—WILLIE WATSON.

"How far is't call'd to Forres? What are these,  
So wither'd and so wild in their attire,  
That look not like the inhabitants of the earth,  
And yet are on't?"

SHAKESPEARE'S "MACBETH."

THE name and fame of Willox and his oracular stone and bridle had not died out in Strathspey and Glenavon in the early years of the present century. In his lifetime his name was a household word over the northern counties of Scotland. It was said that he inherited the magic stone and the witch-finding bridle from his maternal grandfather. They were acquired by him in a singular way. In the gloaming of a summer's evening he surprised and captured a mermaid in her lonely retreat on the shore of Lochindorb. He carried her home in triumph, but she soon began to languish and pine for her watery home. So eventually she purchased her freedom by revealing the place where the magic stone was hidden.

On the banks of the same loch he captured a water kelpie, waiting no doubt to allure some hapless traveller to a watery grave. He must have been a man of action, for he instantly caught the kelpie by the bridle. In spite of its efforts to free itself, he held on till it slipped from the creature's head. In a moment it transformed itself into the shape of a man and pursued its spoiler, roaring and uttering fearful imprecations against him. With the evil spirit close at his heels, he reached his dwelling, where his wife stood inside an open window. He threw in the bridle, and she caught it in her apron as her husband fell exhausted to the ground.

There is no record of how the first possessor of the hardly won relics utilised them for the detection of witches and their craft. It was reserved for his descendant, the subject of this chapter, to benefit the victims of the malignant witches that were to be found

in every parish. His services were in constant demand far and near, and he was not slow to respond to every call. He rode forth single handed, mounted on his long-haired Highland sheltie, with the magic bridle dangling at his belt and the oracular stone in a wallet on his back, to do battle with the powers of darkness.

Ever since Shakespeare's time, the counties of Moray and Nairn were notorious for the number of witches that were at one time within their bounds.

Wilcox, on one of his periodical visits to the Laich of Moray, visited Elgin. One morning he ascended Ladyhill and surveyed the rising city, and said that he could count "twenty reekin' lums" of houses in which a witch dwelt.

It was generally believed that Wilcox, by consulting his marvellous stone, could tell the nature of the spell cast by the witch upon the farmer's cattle or his crops, and how to counteract them. And what was considered of greater importance, he could relieve human beings suffering from the black art of witchcraft. We believe that this wonderful talisman and the bridle are still in the possession of his descendants. The so-called stone is a die of rock-crystal he had no doubt picked up near his home on Cairngorm. It is just the sort of article to impress the imagination and credulity of the people around him. No doubt the situation of his home, in one of the wildest and most impassable spots in the whole Grampian range, helped on the superstition.

In September, 1860, Her Majesty the Queen and the Prince Consort passed through Tomintoul on their way from Grantown to Balmoral. Her Majesty gave great offence to the inhabitants by her reference to the village in "Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands." In it she says—"Tomintoul is the most tumble-down, poor-looking place I ever saw. A long street, with three inns, miserable, dirty-looking houses and people, and a sad look of wretchedness about it. Grant told me that it was the dirtiest, poorest village in the whole Highlands."

So greatly has the village been improved since the late Queen Victoria passed through it that it could scarcely be recognised as the same place. Situated in the midst of the grandest mountain scenery in Scotland, it is fast becoming a resort for tourists. Her Majesty records that in passing Inchrory they observed two eagles soaring splendidly above and alighting on the top of the hills ;

and she winds up her record of the expedition thus—"This never-to-be-forgotten expedition will always be remembered with delight."

A few miles beyond Tomintoul the traveller reaches Delavorar, a very lonely and solitary place, where in 1645 Montrose bivouacked with his army on his return from the Battle of Auldearn.

In June, 1689, Claverhouse and his followers were in this place, on their way to Killiecrankie, where he ended his remarkable career.

Two miles further on stands the house of the witchfinder. The next inhabited place is Inchrory, where the Duke of Richmond has erected a shooting lodge. Between this place and Ben Avon the glen is an entire solitude for at least a distance of twelve miles. Loneliness seems to brood over the wild and rugged scene, until the limpid waters of Loch Avon come into view like a lake of molten silver sparkling in the sunshine, overshadowed by the majestic form of Ben Avon.

It is not singular that a man cradled amidst such wild and impressive scenes was looked upon as being surrounded by a mysterious halo. How far Willox believed in his predictions we can only conjecture, but there is no doubt that he possessed all the native shrewdness of his race, with a far-seeing insight into the gullibility of human nature. Were it not for the evidence of historical records, we would not at the present day believe that the ministers of the reformed Kirk of Scotland were not only believers in witchcraft and wizardry, but many of them were zealous in their persecution.

It would appear that so late as Willox's time the votaries of the "Prince of Darkness" abounded in the North. It is said that frequently when he rode through a village or hamlet with his magic bridle at his side, its virtue was so powerful that a witch has rushed from her dwelling and tried to put her head into it. If a woman was suspected of the "black art," the witchfinder was employed to shake his bridle in her face. If any unfortunate creature was afflicted with any physical deformity, a hump-back, a bearded chin, blear eyes, or a biting, radical tongue that railed against neighbours, rich and poor, all such were more or less suspected of "trafficking with Satan."

Within the memory of the writer there died in the Parish of

Aberlour a diminutive object named Willie Watson. His singular appearance and the way he lived placed him outside the pale of common humanity, and invested him with all the attributes of a wizard. He was born in Aberdeen. His parents gave him an excellent education. His dwarfish stature was very little noticed or commented on until he entered the University, where he became the butt for the ridicule of the students. The consequence was that he fled from his home, came to the Parish of Aberlour, and built a hovel with his own hands on the edge of a barren moor, where he spent his life, a confirmed misanthrope. In the latter years of his life he presented a picture well calculated to impress one that he was of the supernatural kind. A little over four feet in height, free from deformity, with a high and well-formed head that was always crowned with a small blue bonnet, the skin of his face was the colour of old parchment, wrinkled to such a degree as to resemble the stomach of a sheep turned inside out. There was not a hair to be seen upon it. His small eyes resembled those of a rat. When he ventured abroad and appeared on the village street, every boy and girl flew to their homes like rabbits to their burrows. Enveloped in a blanket, fastened like a shawl with a bone skewer (believed to be the shin bone of an unchristened bairn), his tiny hands, thrust from between the folds of the blanket, grasped a long, slender pole that overtopped his head about three feet. With it he paddled himself along the village street, pausing every few yards to utter some unintelligible gibberish.

What was he saying? Was the spirit of the prophet upon him, or was he denouncing the sins of the parish?

The writer has seen him emerge from the hole that constituted the entrance to his hovel, go a few steps from it, and point his long pole to the setting sun. When it sank below the horizon, he turned it to the still sunlit crest of Benrinnes, gesticulating the while. Was the wizard a fire-worshipper? In the soot-begrimed hovel where he had lived for so many years, how did he spend his time, and what were the communings of his spirit in his lonely solitude? In his isolated life and in his personal appearance he had all the outward attributes of a wizard. If he possessed the power to

O'ercast the night and cloud the moon,  
An' make the deil obedient to his croon,

he exercised it wisely.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### RUSTIC LIFE IN THE HIGHLANDS—THE PRINCES OF EILEAN AIGAS.

“ Let not ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys and destiny obscure ;  
Nor grandeur hear with disdainful smile  
The short and simple annals of the poor.”

GRAY'S "ELEGY."

THE social condition of the people living in the counties of Moray, Banff, and Aberdeen when the late beloved Queen began to reign was so different to what it is now that only those who took a share in the rejoicings at the Coronation can in any measure realise the wonderful change that has come over all aspects of social, domestic, and internal life in the counties named. The improved condition of the houses of the people and their better sanitary arrangements have been the means of preventing those fearful visitations of fever and smallpox so prevalent sixty years ago. One shudders at the remembrance of those deadly epidemics that carried away many young and promising lives in villages and farm towns, and cast a gloom over whole parishes. That the victims were generally young people made it more sad. It is now a rare thing to see a pock-pitted person, as they were termed ; but sixty years ago every three persons out of five that had passed middle life were more or less face-marked by that deadly scourge.

What are now termed the luxuries of life were beyond the means of poor cottars and country folks in general. Tea of very inferior quality cost from five to six shillings a pound ; raw sugar that in every respect resembled draff cost from eightpence to ninepence per pound ; treacle that resembled tar, fourpence and sixpence per pound. Coffee was almost an unknown article in a poor man's house. When we look at the quality and the price paid for these articles at the present time, one can only wonder how such a change can have been brought about. It is just a question

how far the cheapness of these articles has benefited and conduced to the health of poor folks. Simple as their daily fare was, there was no question about the health-giving properties of milk and meal, with butter and eggs. Flesh meat was a rarity in poor men's houses. Their greatest luxury was a "yalla haddick." It will scarcely be credited that Buckie fishwives carried heavy creels of fish up Speyside as far as Inveraven and Grantown. The weight borne by these stalwart women was a marvel. And what remuneration did their burdens bring them? From a penny to three halfpence was the price asked and given for far better cured and better quality of fish than can be bought at from sixpence to eightpence to-day.

In domestic articles there is a complete revolution. When the late Queen began to reign wooden utensils were fast giving place to delf. The housewife that had her dresser shelves well plenished with the blue willow-pattern plates, mugs, and pottingers was to be envied. Well do I remember the pride we all took in a plate with a picture of Queen Caroline that occupied the place of honour in what the people in the north of England call "the delf rack." We hear a good deal about being taught by object lesson. The picture of that ill-used and unfortunate Queen was, I believe, my first lesson in history, and was never forgotten. How many children yet unborn will look in future years upon the motherly and benevolent face of our late beloved Queen, and learn a lesson from it in the history of a woman who was indeed noble and royal? These are only earthly titles, borne often by the unworthy, but Queen Victoria adorned her exalted station with all the virtues of highest womanhood.

Amongst the great changes that have taken place, nothing in a domestic sense has surpassed what I may call the pictorial art in books and periodicals, as well as in the embellishment of almost every home in the land by artistic coloured wall papers and prints of every description, at a price within the means of the working man. We send our children to public schools to get what we term their education. There they acquire, or ought to acquire, practical knowledge; but the home is, or ought to be, the training school of the child in all the domestic virtues.

One of my most vivid recollections of the early days of Queen Victoria's reign was a visit to Speyside of the two men who repre-

sented themselves as two legitimate grandsons of the Pretender, and were known as the Princes of Eilean Aigas. Their names were John Sobieski and Charles Edward Stuart. It is well known that Prince Charles Edward Stuart left behind him no legitimate offspring. It is certain that they had no connection with the Royal Stuarts. They published a book in 1847, entitled "Tales of the Century, or Sketches of the Romance of History between the years 1746 and 1846." The story told by them in the above publication was to the effect that their father, instead of being a son of Admiral Allan, as was commonly supposed, was a son of Prince Charles and the Princess Louisa, whose birth was kept secret through fear of the Hanoverian family, and who was intrusted to Admiral Allan and passed off as his own son. It is not at all improbable that they themselves believed their own story, and were, strictly speaking, no impostors. At all events it was wonderful to see the deference and loyal respect that was shown to them by the people on Speyside whom they came in contact with. They were of unequal height. The tallest one bore a resemblance to pictures of bonnie Prince Charlie. Both were well made men, and appeared to great advantage in the full Highland garb and appendages that they wore. I believe all this had very much to do in drawing attention and respect to them. When the Queen began to reign the Highland garb was not much worn in lower Strathspey, so the sight of these men, richly clad in the Stuart tartan, was an object of great interest and speculation. Besides the work above-named, they published a book entitled "The Costume of the Clans," a copy of which was ordered at the time for the young Queen's library. Anyone who has read the introduction, which occupies about half the work, of this lofty and amusing book can only suppose that the men who penned it were weak-minded if they believed that at the beginning of the Queen's reign it was possible to incite the loyal Highlanders to enact a second '45.

Amongst other gentlemen's residences that they visited in Strathspey was Elchies. I was fortunate in being told off to direct them by a footpath through the woods to Boat of Elchies. The coin that one of them put into my hand as I parted with them was long treasured by me as a priceless gift, to be worn some day upon my breast "when the auld Stuarts got their ain

again," for had not my own mother's forebears, one a Macdonald and the other a Stuart, followed the Prince and fought for him on the fatal field of Culloden? But alas! the halo that surrounded the name of bonnie Prince Charlie became dimmer and more dim as the years of Her Majesty's reign passed by. Our early delusions die hardly. How we cling to them, even when the scales are fallen from our eyes! We are loth to give them up. Had I lived in the days of my great-grandfathers, I certainly would have done what they did, followed "the Prince." But I know now what I did not know when the Queen began to reign, that the man whose name stirred within one emotions of loyalty and piety showed eventually that he was devoid of all the virtues that make even poor men great.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### STRATHSPEY MUSIC.

“What needs there be sae great a phraise  
Wi’ dringing dull Italian lays;  
I wadna gi’e oor ain Strathspeys  
For half a hunder score o’ ’em.  
They’re dowf and dowie at the best  
Compared wi’ Tullochgorum.”

WE cannot fully realise how much our highest and purest pleasure is to be found in music. This divine gift is universal, but its manifestation varies in different nationalities and races of men. There is no better illustration of this adaptability of music to a people and climate than in our own national music. Strathspey music, compared to the creations of the divine masters, is rude and simple in the extreme to people of a refined musical taste, but it has to a Scotchman a soul-stirring power, and awakens emotions in his heart that can only be stirred by the matchless melodies of his native land. Even heart-stirring as many of them are, they would lose half their charm were they divorced from the words that accompany them. No nation is so rich in melodies that stir all the emotions of the heart. What Scotchman does not feel his patriotic blood stirred by “Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled?” and can anyone join in singing “Auld Lang Syne” without having the memory of many a sweet and dear remembrance awakened in his heart? And the person that can listen unmoved to the mournful strains of “The Flowers of the Forest” is not to be envied. We possess a rich and priceless inheritance in our national melodies.

The Scotchman who, through force of circumstances, voluntarily leaves his country poor in worldly substance, carries with him an inheritance in the matchless melodies of his native land. They never fail to be a source of pleasure no matter how varied and chequered his lot may be. Strathspey music, like our national poetry, has been made famous by men who have enriched

it by their genius and patriotism. Amongst them Neil Gow must take his place in the front rank. Although he was not born in Strathspey, he early imbibed the spirit and love of Highland music. It may be that the matchless scenery around the native home of the humble plaid-weaver of Dunkeld had an elevating and refining influence upon the man, whose magic bow stirred the hearts of his countrymen with emotions too deep for words to express. Our native Strath can boast of having had men who caught the mantle of the peerless Neil.

Burns, in writing to his brother Gilbert, says, in reference to his Highland tour, "I crossed Spey and went down the stream through Strathspey, so famous in Scottish music, till I reached Grant Castle, where I spent half a day with Sir James Grant and family." His excursion extended to the Fall of Foyers, Colloden Moor, Inverness, returning south by Nairn and Forres, where Mr. Brodie showed him the famous "Forres stone." At Elgin he viewed the venerable ruins of the Cathedral. "Cross Spey to Fochabers—fine place (Gordon Castle, the seat of the Duke of Gordon), worthy of the generous proprietor—dine. Company—Duke and Duchess, Ladies Charlotte and Magdeline. . . . —the Duke makes me happier than ever great man did—noble, princely, yet mild, condescending and affable, gay and kind—the Duchess, witty and sensible—God bless them!" Lady Charlotte was at the time of Burns' visit nineteen years of age; she afterwards became the Duchess of Richmond, and was the mother of the present Duke. Lady Magdeline married Sir Robert Sinclair of Murkle. On 30th of October, 1787, Burns wrote to Mr. James Hoy, Gordon Castle, who acted as librarian to the Duke—"My request is—'Cauld Kail in Aberdeen' is one intended for this number (second volume of Johnson's Museum), and I beg a copy of his Grace of Gordon's words to it, which you were so kind as to repeat to me. You may be sure we won't prefix the author's name except you like." In a second letter to Mr. Hoy he writes—"The Duke's song, independent totally of his dukeship, charms me. There is I know not what of wild happiness of thought and expression peculiarly beautiful in the old Scottish song style of which his Grace, old venerable Skinner, the author of 'Tullochgorum,' &c., and the late Ross, at Lochee, of true Scottish poetic memory, are the only modern instances that I recollect,

since Ramsay with his contemporaries and poor Bob Fergusson went to the world of deathless existence and truly immortal song. The mob of mankind, that many-headed beast, would laugh at so serious a speech about an old song; but, as Job says, 'Oh, that mine adversary had written a book!' Those who think that composing a Scotch song is a trifling business—let them try. I wish my Lord Duke would pay a proper attention to the Christian admonition—"Hide not your candle under a bushel," but 'Let your light shine before men.' I could name half-a-dozen Dukes that I guess are a devilish deal worse employed; nay, I question if there are half-a-dozen better: perhaps there are not half that scanty number, whom Heaven has favoured with the tuneful, happy, and, I will say, glorious gift."

One cannot wonder that with the encouragement of such a patron as the music-loving Duke of Gordon, his retainer, Mr. Marshall, developed into one of the greatest composers of Strathspey airs that the North of Scotland has produced. As long as the Spey and Deveron run to the sea the airs and marches that he composed will be played and sung. His son, the late Mr. Marshall, Newfield, Dandaleith, was a man whose exquisite ear lent a refinement to the touch of the bow that few could equal. Our Strath music has not only a soul-inspiring influence, but it lends dignity to the bearing of the man that is endowed with it. Mr. Marshall was, in the fullest sense of the word, a gentleman. Tall and erect in figure, he had a dignity in his bearing that commanded respect. In his private life he was loved and esteemed. He had a habit of taking long walks alone, no doubt to drink in the varied sights and the music made by the ripplings of his beloved Spey.

There was another famous violin player of Strathspey, the notorious freebooter M'Pherson. He frequently found a safe retreat in the 'rocky crags that overhang the burn of Carron, opposite the old romantic mill. Sixty years ago his exploits and his daring deeds were told by old people around many a fireside in Strathspey, and it was strange to see the amount of sympathy evinced for his ignominious death. It would appear from a song that he failed to find sympathisers to plead for him, while another freebooter named Brown escaped the gallows through the intercession of the "Laird o' Grant"—

"The Laird o' Grant, that Hielan' saunt,  
 Wi' a' his majesty,  
 He pled the cause o' Peter Broon  
 And lets poor M'Pherson dee."

James M'Pherson was a man of uncommon strength. Along with some gipsies that he consorted with, he was seized by Duff of Bracco, ancestor of the Earl of Fife. On November 7th, 1700, he was tried before the Sheriff of Banffshire. On the 16th of the same month he was executed along with some of the gipsies on the Gallows-hill of Banff. Before his execution he played the tune, "M'Pherson's Rant ;" he had composed the air and the song while he lay under sentence of death. The words of the song show clearly what manner of man he was—

"I've spent my time in rioting,  
 Debauched my health and strength ;  
 I squandered fast as pillage came,  
 And fell to shame at length.

"But dantonly and wantonly  
 And rantonly I'll gae ;  
 I'll play a tune and dance it roun'  
 Beneath the gallows-tree."

On finishing the tune he asked if anyone would accept the instrument as a gift at his hands. No one came forward ; he then indignantly broke the violin on his knee and threw away the fragments, and submitted to his fate. His sword, preserved at Duff House, shows what a powerful man he must have been. His bones, which were disinterred some years ago, were allowed by all who saw them to be much larger and stronger than the bones of ordinary men.

It is not surprising that Burns composed a stirring song to the tune of "M'Pherson's Rant"—

"Oh, what is death but parting breath ?  
 On many a bloody plain  
 I've dared his face, and in this place  
 I scorn him yet again !"

A learned writer says—"It is beyond question that what is called Scottish music has been derived from the Gaelic race. Its characteristics are purely Celtic. Scottish Lowland music, so much and so deservedly admired, is a legacy from the Celtic muse throughout. There is nothing in it which it holds in common with any Saxon race in existence. Compare it with the common melodies in use among the English, and the two are proved totally distinct."



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE FIRESIDE AND THE BURNSIDE.

"The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face  
They round the ingle form a circle wide;  
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,  
The big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride.

"THE COTTAR'S SATURDAY NIGHT."

IF I were asked to name the two words dearest to a Scotchman's heart, I would say that they are, *Mother* and *Home*. It is an old and trite saying that "Home is home, be it ever so humble." To his home and to his native land a true Scotchman's heart "untravell'd turns," and to the memories that cluster around the old fireside where his mother rocked him in the cradle. The influence exercised by the mothers of Scotland upon their children can hardly be over-estimated. No matter how humble her dwelling is, its fireside is a consecrated place. To see her seated by it, with an infant in her lap and a child kneeling by her side lisping out its evening prayer—

"When I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep"—

is perhaps the most sublime sight to be imagined out of Heaven. The lisping child reads in its mother's eyes the depth of the undying love that shines through them. All unconscious of its surroundings, the child bends its knees on the earthen floor of its humble dwelling and repeats its evening prayer to its mother's dictation, feeling that the fireside is consecrated by her presence.

Poor "tempest-tossed and passion-driven" Burns could never quite cast off the influence of his father's prayers offered on his behalf beneath the roof of the auld clay biggin'. In his "Cottar's Saturday Night" he has given a picture of a humble cottar fireside that no pen but his could have portrayed—

"From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,  
That makes her loved at home, rever'd abroad;  
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,  
'An honest man's the noblest work of God.'

And, certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road  
The cottage leaves the palace far behind ;  
What is a lordling's pomp ?—a cumbersome load  
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind."

Many a child before it has acquired the art of reading has its mind stored with the tales and stories told or read to it for its amusement, and they often leave a deeper and more lasting impression on its blank and plastic mind than do the stories read in after life. I can well remember the first time that I heard "Tam o' Shanter" recited by our fireside, and I have even at the present time a vivid recollection of the fear and wonder that filled my mind at its recital. I trembled for the fate of the redoubtable Tam fleeing for his life, pursued by that short-sarkit cutty that had behaved so badly to her kind and God-fearing granny. The recital of "Thrummycap" never failed to fill my mind with a desire to "kick the ba'," and, although I have not seen a printed copy of the piece for sixty years, I remember almost every line of it.

Of all the prose stories that I read in my boyish days, none of them left so abiding an impression on my mind as the tale of "Abidla, the Persian Shepherd." "A great and wise Caliph of that empire was impressed with astonishment that he had not found one really happy man in his wide dominions. In order to see if there was a man happy and content in them, he disguised himself as a beggar and set forth on his quest through his kingdom. He was returning in despair when he espied a shepherd's cot. On entering it he was struck by the poverty of its interior, but on entering into conversation with the shepherd he found that he not only was content but supremely happy. The good Caliph revealed himself, and he carried the reluctant shepherd to his palace, clothed him in gorgeous apparel, and placed him in a high office. But from the day that he entered the palace he became an object of envy to the courtiers. They noticed that every morning he entered at the same hour a vaulted chamber beneath the palace, locking the door behind him when he entered. The envious courtiers told the Caliph that he was filling the vault with stolen treasure to be carried away. The Caliph did not believe the report, but to satisfy the importunity of his courtiers, one morning after the shepherd entered he ordered the door to be forced open. To his astonishment, there in a

corner sat the shepherd, clothed in his sheepskin garb, with his crook by his side, while he tuned his reed to a plaintive Persian air. He came forward, fell at the feet of the Caliph, clasped his knees, and asked for mercy and liberty to return to his humble oot. The good Caliph laid hold of his hand, lifted him up, and said, 'Go in peace, my son.'

If the supply of fireside literature for children was limited when our late beloved Queen ascended the throne, what little there was had a tendency to educate the moral faculties of the child. The Bible was more of a fireside book at that time than it is at present. No new stories that have ever been written can equal the grand old stories told in the Bible.

From the fireside to the burnside is only a transition from one pleasant place to another. Where can we find either an old or young Scotch schoolboy that has not "paidled in the burn" and roamed upon its banks, to him a veritable paradise. An Edinburgh lady took her Highland servant to see Martin's famous picture, "The Plains of Heaven." She earnestly looked at it, and turned to her mistress and asked, "Is there nae hills in Heaven? If there's nane, it maun be a dreary, waesome place." Let us at least hope that there are burns in "the better land." We know that there is a river in it, but for one river that we have in Scotland we have five hundred burns. Here in England we have "t' beck," but there is as much difference between a Scottish burn and a beck as there is between a Dutchman and a Highlander. While the sluggish beck flows on its lazy, noiseless course, the brawling burn rushes on its way, murmuring as it goes, in chorus with the birds that sing upon its banks. Hidden upon them, too, are countless treasures very precious to a schoolboy's heart. Away in yonder thicket there is a treasure only known to himself. Every morning before going to school he creeps stealthily into it, to see if another precious egg is deposited in "his" mavis's nest. The whole burnside is by right of descent the schoolboy's freehold. There he gathers his fruit and flowers, that cost him nothing for their cultivation. There he also has an aviary. The birds find their own food, and serenade him morning and evening. He fashions his own musical whistles from the arn (alder) bushes that grow by the burnside. He lops off the newly leafed twigs from the birch trees, and carries them home to

festoon the dresser and fill the house with the perfume of their aromatic leaves. He has also mining rights on both sides of the burn—at least this right was claimed by some of the old Aberlour schoolboys. When the time came to play marbles, they went to the “clay hole” on the burnside, worked up a quantity of it, from which was rolled into shape the needful marbles. After being dried in the sun they were burned in the fire. The sand that was famous for its golden colour was also mined on the burnside, and carried home to strew the newly swept earthen floor and “door-stane.” Sixty years ago poor schoolboys had to fall back on natural productions for the implements of their play. Were they less happy than the school callants of the present day with all their art-fashioned and mechanical playthings? No, they were content with such things as they had, and if they had fewer bawbees in their pouches than the present school callants of Aberlour, they were as supremely happy. But a really unhappy schoolboy is as rare as a white blackbird.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### "THE CRIPPLE WIFE OF FIFE-KEITH" AND OTHER BEGGARS.

**O**F all the occupations that flourished in my early days none have fallen into such decadence as begging. Whether the folk of Aberlour were kinder or more benevolent than the people of neighbouring parishes, I cannot tell, but beggars of every grade and description laid the people, rich and poor, under contribution.

Of the many beggars who periodically visited the Parish of Aberlour, none of them made such a lasting impression on my mind as "The Cripple Wife of Fife-Keith." The writer's first impression of her still clings to him. She was in many respects no ordinary beggar. When the swallows came and the buds of the birk trees were bursting into leaf, we looked for the coming of "The Wife," whom we considered neither more nor less than an incarnation of evil spirits. It would be impossible to give a description of her bodily appearance, as the writer never saw her out of the sort of box-cart that she sat in, covered up with blankets and shawls. The box was fixed on a sort of mason's hand-barrow, so that two people could carry her from house to house. In this fashion she toured over the country during the summer months. The news of her advent flew with lightning speed through the village, and every loon in it ran to meet her as she entered. "The Wife" was no easy burden to carry from door to door. "Bold was her face, and fayre and rede of hew," and her one-crowned mutch gave her the appearance of wearing a mitre, such as we see in the pictures of the early Popes of Rome. Her face was plump and rosy, with a pair of eyes that seemed ready to burst from their sockets when she had occasion to pour forth the full volume of her wrath, which she often did. It was the custom when two people carried her to a door for one of them to be relieved by the occupant of the house, who was in his turn

relieved at the second door. When a distance intervened between the houses, the burden was no light one, for besides her portly person "The Wife" carried her belongings in the box. One of them was a fair-sized greybeard "pig," containing, as she said, "mint water for the stamack." She never failed to call at old Aberlour House, for "Lowery" always filled the "pig" with an essence that suited "The Wife's" stamack better than mint water. After her call at the laird's she entered the village triumphantly, escorted by all the loons of the place. She carried a long hazel rung by her side, and if any "nickum" came within reach of it he had good reason to remember "The Cripple Wife of Fife-Keith" for some time after.

On one occasion the bearers set her down at Tommy Tethers' door. Although very lame himself, he showed no sympathy for "The Cripple Wife." When she had sat for some time at his door, she bawled out, "Are ye nae comin' oot wi' that aul' moggan fu' o' fite siller that never sees the daylight, tae help a puir cripple woman sittin' helpless at yer door?" "Gang awa', gang awa'; she's a puir body hersel'. She's lame, an' canna pit her fit to ta grun' or gang fae hame to sell her tethers," replied Tommy. "Gang fae hame, ye aul' Heilan' thief! ye dae naething but gang ower the hale kwintra cheatin', an' thievin' the hair tae mak' yer tethers! Ye sud be hanged wi' ane o' yer ain taws! I wonner at the fowk o' Aiberlour dinna droon ye in Spey an' gi'e yer siller tae the puir fowk!"

This episode was completely eclipsed when "The Wife" arrived at the door of Deacon Grant. He was whistling his favourite air, "The Castle o' Montgomery," and chalking the outlines of a coat when "The Wife" saluted him through the open window. "Are ye gaun tae lat a puir cripple dee at yer door, ye heartless heathen? If the Lord had only gi'en me strength I wud never ha'e come tae the door o' sic a sneevin', sneeshin'-nosed stick-the-loose as you!" "Cripple Wife of Fife-Keith, begone! I spurn you from my door—begone! You ought to be turned into a pillar of salt and set up to be a warning to the people of Fife-Keith. I'll never condescend to carry such a drunken old harlot as you from my door. Begone!" said the Deacon in his most impressive diction. "Carry me," replied "The Wife," "ye aul' dementit Naboth! I'll leave yer door, an' may

the curse o' Cain fa' on ye!" was the "Cripple Wife's" parting salutation to the Deacon.

It makes me even now blush for the manhood of our village that many of them refused to carry "The Wife" from one door to another. Laden with the spoils of the day, she found quarters in "The Cottage," beneath the roof of Widow Cruickshank.

"The long-remembered beggar was her guest,  
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,  
Sat by the fire, and talked the night away."

Amongst the gentlemen beggars we had "Hector Hairy-Purse." Clad in kilt and sporran, like a tourist, he carried neither bread nor meal, only his wardrobe in a wallet on his back. He never solicited alms of any kind. Who ever saw a kilted Highlander begging? Like Rob Roy, he would spurn the idea of such a "dooncome," as did Rob when the Bailie offered to make weavers of his sons. It was no disgrace to a kilted Highlander to take what he wanted from the store of the Lowlander. Two of them entered the cottage of a poor widow on their way home from the defeat at Prestonpans. Famished with hunger, they, figuratively speaking, ate up the poor widow. One of them noticed a web of plaiding standing in a corner. They at once cut off the web a few ells apiece. The poor widow in her sorrow and wrath declared that they would have to pay dearly for the plaiding at the last day. "Och," said one of them, "that be a lang credit; we'll tak' her a'." Hector was in all respects a Highland gentleman. Once a year he came to Ruthrie, where he got a kindly welcome from the late Mr. and Mrs. Green, who never turned a beggar from their door. The face of the old man was adorned with a long flowing white beard, a thing not common at that time. His features were sharp and regular, and he had light blue eyes—altogether such a face at Raphael loved to paint. The writer has never forgotten the first time he lighted the old man to his bed. Before he lay down on it, he knelt in prayer. When I laid the blankets over him he exclaimed, "God bless ye; they're a' kind folks here." This was the man whom I feared to meet in my childish days.

There was one happy wight that the writer envied, namely, "The Mannie wi' the three Newfoundland dogs." They were harnessed to a tiny carriage with three wheels. Like a prince of the

blood royal, "The Mannie," seated in it, went bowling along the highways in the North of Scotland like the wind. No wonder that his face beamed with smiles. That he came "frae the Sooth" was evident—his tongue betrayed him. Fluent it was, and every wife and bairn in our village considered it a great honour to minister to his wants. To be allowed to stroke the heads of his faithful dogs was looked upon with the satisfaction and pride that an alderman feels when he shakes hands with Royalty. If "The Mannie" had an eye for scenery, what an opportunity he had for seeing it when riding in state in the Highlands, through the Pass of Killiecrankie and down by bonnie Kinrara. One thing was certain—"The Mannie"

"Was a care-defying blade  
As ever Bacchus listed,"

and he would have been a welcome guest in Poesie Nancy's far-famed howf.

The jolly beggar—where is he? Supplanted by that lazy, dour, long-faced lubber, the tramp. What a substitute we are saddled with in the place of the immortal Eddy Ochiltree and the tinker bard who tuned his lyre to such good purpose that Nancy's wa's shook with thunders of applause!

I believe that Mr. Carnegie, our country's greatest benefactor, was the first to inaugurate in this country the driving tour. On reading a description of his progress from Land's End to John o' Groat's, I bemoaned my poverty that compels me to take my limited travelling tours at "a penny a mile." By the laws of this old, thread-bare country, Mr. Carnegie is prevented from enjoying what I verily believe is the highest pleasure and enjoyment a man can attain to, namely, to drive through his native land in a tiny three-wheeled carriage drawn by three Newfoundland dogs. We have read that a fabulous reward was offered to the man who would invent a new pleasure. The man who first drove through the country in a carriage with three Newfoundland dogs might have reasonably claimed the reward.

There was a form of begging in my early days that has entirely disappeared in the North of Scotland, called "thiggin." Poor crofters and feuars went from farm to farm begging oats or bere to sow their land. There was also a curious form of charity generally given to an orphan boy. If such there was in the parish, he had



the privilege of going to the mill when the parishioners ground their corn. They gave him a quantity of meal in proportion to the size of their melder. During the early and middle decades of the last century there lived in a Speyside parish a wealthy and widely known man who as a boy "took up his lick at the mill."

## Poems.



## POEMS.

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### LINES WRITTEN ON A VISIT TO SPEYSIDE.

When tired with worldly cares and toil,  
How pleasant 'tis to stray,  
And taste the sweets that Nature spreads  
Along the banks of Spey !  
No music to my ear so dear  
As thine, soft murm'ring stream !  
The memory of it haunts my heart  
Like some forgotten dream.

Though life's young day has passed away,  
With all its fancied train  
Of boyish hopes and airy dreams,  
Yet thou art still the same.  
Oft on thy sandy banks I built  
The mimic castle high,  
And tried, like ancient Bab'lon's sons,  
To reach the vaulted sky.

But sandy castles are like those  
We build high in the air—  
They vanish like the morning mist,  
And leave our landscape bare.  
Ah ! where are now the hearts and hands  
That joined my boyish play ?  
Some on life's stream have gone to wreck,  
And some have passed away.

A few, like men, fight bravely in  
Life's battle, sorely prest ;  
But onward, upward, still they cry,  
" We'll conquer ere we rest."  
Oft to the earth they are borne down,  
And forced to quit the field ;  
But still aloft Hope's banner waves  
With " Die, but never yield !"

Ye greyhaired fathers of my youth,  
I'll meet you here no more ;  
Just like a stream in years gone by,  
You've reached the boundless shore.  
Yonder, around the grey kirk walls,  
Your final rest you take ;  
To earthly change and busy life  
No coming morn will wake.

The Sunday bell that tolls at morn  
Will greet your ears no more ;  
Alas ! no more your friends you'll meet  
Around the old kirk door ;  
In friendly talk no more you'll join,  
Nor ever want to know  
If beasts be selling cheap or dear,  
Or grain priced high or low.

Sons of the soil ! your life was toil,  
But softly now ye rest,  
And sleep as soundly and as calm  
As those in purple dressed.  
Upon yon crumbling, moss-grown stones  
I read your name and age,  
With many a solemn warning text  
Culled from the sacred page.

Your simple lives need no historic pen,  
No brazen trumpet to rehearse your fame ;  
Your humble virtues long will live behind,  
Though flatt'ring record never breathe your name.

Yours were the virtues that made Scotland great—  
A frugal people and united state ;  
When tyrants rose to hurl you from your seat,  
Them back ye thrust in sure and dire defeat.

## TO MY AULD PIKE STAFF.

My auld pike staff, my trusty frien',  
 Like hand and glove we aye ha'e been ;  
 Mony a change we baith ha'e seen,  
                                 Since first we met ;  
 Atween us yet nae words ha'e been,  
                                 I'm prood to say't.

Well do I mind the April morn  
 I took you frae your parent thorn.  
 Although at times you've been the scorn  
                                 O' modern pride,  
 I ne'er could bide to ha'e you shorn  
                                 O' bark or hide.

A varnished coat ye ne'er could shaw,  
 Like sticks that come frae far awa' ;  
 Nor were ye ever busket braw  
                                 Wi' dangling tassel ;  
 But aye a sturdy shank could shaw,  
                                 To bide a brassel.

When I to kirk or market gaed,  
 You aye did help me in my need ;  
 I didna want a hie'ry reed,  
                                 Like strutting spark ;  
 They look nae better than a weed,  
                                 And dae nae wark.

Ower hills and glens I've wandered wide  
 With you aye faithful by my side ;  
 Down craigs and rocks you've been my guide,  
                                 And kept me right ;  
 With you I ne'er felt dashed nor fleyed  
                                 In darkest night.

On mony a wild-goose chase we've been,  
When I was thoughtless, young, and green ;  
Full forty miles we've often gane  
    On summer's day,  
When some famed spot was to be seen  
    Where heroes lay.

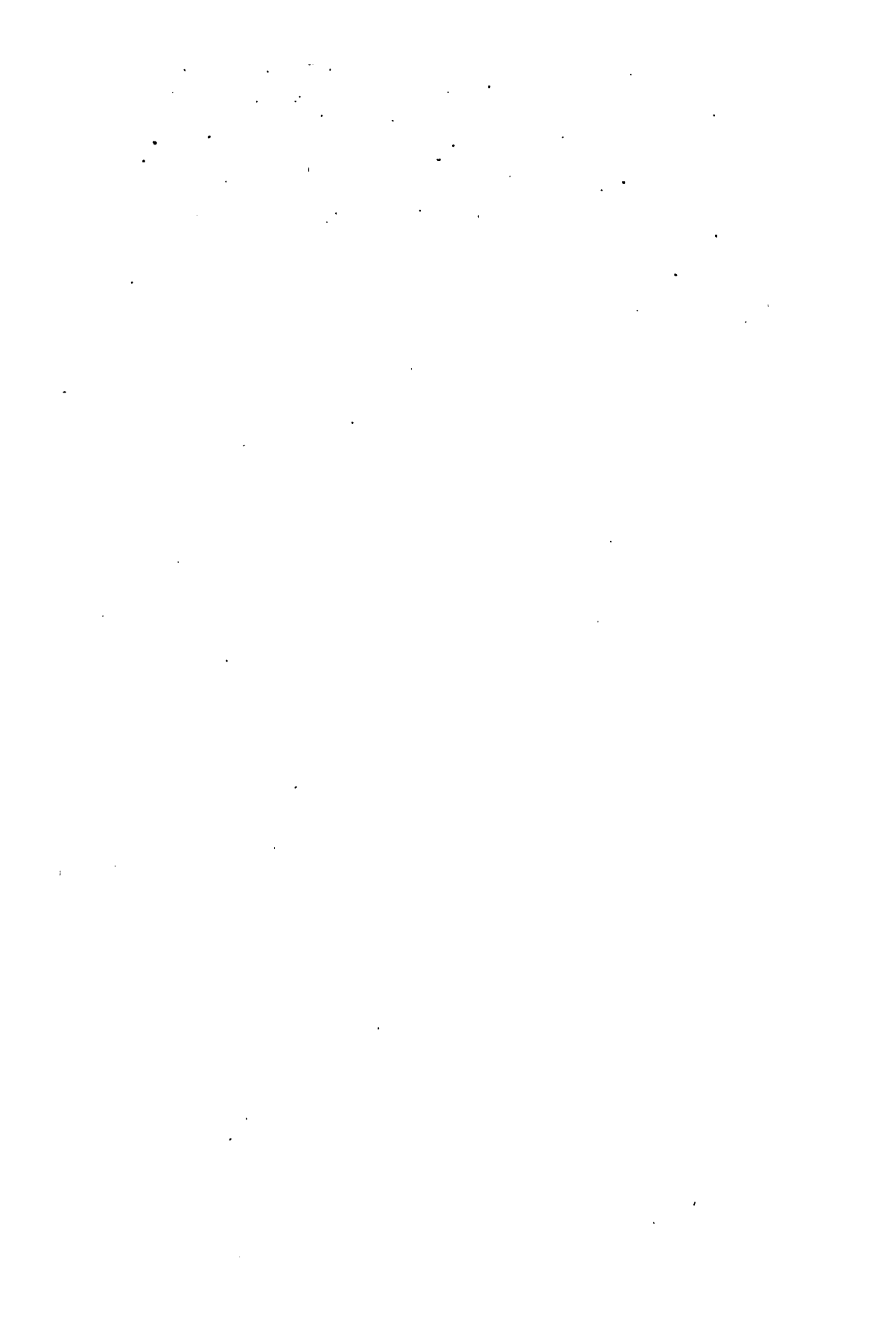
But now auld age is come at last,  
And all those thoughtless days are past,  
And oh, alas ! they vanish fast,  
    Like some sweet dream ;  
For them I'll raise nae mournful blast,  
    Nae poet's theme.

We count our years now by the score,  
Our furthest journey's round the door ;  
New scenes we'll ne'er again explore,  
    'Mid Nature's charms ;  
But thought of what we've seen before  
    My old heart warms.

Thae thoughtless folks may sneer and laugh  
At you and me, my auld pike staff,  
We'll little heed their idle chaff,  
    But toddle on ;  
You'll be my friend, my auld pike staff,  
    Till I am gone.











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